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TRAVELER

JUNE/JULY 2015

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By Lorenzo Carcaterra

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{ LEANNE R. }
VIRGINIA



"Of all the tens of thousands of photos entered in the Then and Now Photo Contest, this shot is the one that gave me a time-traveler's sense of joy. This shot captures something that has been going on at Disney Parks since they first opened: laughing and riding the *Dumbo the Flying Elephant*® ride. Photographically, the out-of-focus edges of the picture also lend a nice touch of nostalgia. It's tough to show two different time periods in one picture, but this one does that nicely through a combination of classic subject and appropriate photographic technique."

DAN WESTERGREN,
DIRECTOR OF
PHOTOGRAPHY,
NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC
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EDITOR'S DESK

You Can Go Where You Want To

Pam answers the telephone at a call center cubicle for 1-800-VISIT-NC in Raleigh. The 60-year-old native North Carolinian in a tan uniform shirt is busy this chilly March day, but she takes a break to talk to me. “Folks are beginning to plan their summer vacations.” Her favorite spots? The coast with its wild horses, descendants of Spanish horses brought over to the New World; Topsail, where she is from; and the Biltmore (“It has 250 rooms!”).

But Pam cannot visit the places she encourages others to see. She and some 15 other inmates of the North Carolina Correctional Institute for Women are part of a unique program fielding phone calls for the state’s tourism line. They also answer the fall foliage number (1-866-6-LEAVES) and the wine number (1-877-3-NCWINE). Though the prison houses about 1,500 women, only those with long remaining sentences, no infractions,



The wild horses of North Carolina

and customer service skills make the grade; there is a two-year training period. As deputy warden John Habuda explained, “We want people who won’t be leaving anytime soon.”

People who cannot travel dispensing travel advice. If there’s meaning in the irony, then perhaps it’s this: Not everyone in the world has the freedom to travel. And even if we live in a politically stable country, it takes a measure of money, health, and emotional wherewithal to wander the world.

Pam tells me she is serving a life sentence but won’t say what happened to put her behind bars. She finds joy in helping people plan their North Carolina vacations, and inspiration in the horses on the beaches, who “run wild and free.”

I’ll be thinking of Pam and her horses the next time I’m inconvenienced by flight delays, squeezed in the middle seat, or wide-eyed at 3 a.m. from jet lag. It’s a privilege to travel. —*Norie Quintos*



A mini-concert in Queenstown, New Zealand

BEHIND THE LENS

THE BAND’S BACK TOGETHER

When Croatia-based photographer Nikola Smernic snapped the above shot while on vacation in Queenstown, New Zealand, he didn’t know anything about its subjects. After the endearing picture won our annual

photo contest’s Merit Award in 2013, the piano busker and animal-hat-wearing girl, who had no prior connection, both reached out to Smernic and have stayed in contact since—the street musician even played at Smernic’s wedding.

ENTER NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER’S 2015 PHOTO CONTEST AT NATGEO.COM/TRAVELERPHOTOCONTEST.

WHAT’S NEW

Sure, you can’t actually witness day-to-day life in ancient Rome or Virginia’s Jamestown colony, but National Geographic’s new bimonthly *History* magazine can get you pretty close to the action. The June/July 2015 issue, which hits newsstands on May 26, takes an in-depth look at civilizations, cultures, and conflicts past, from the Maya ruins of Tikal in Guatemala to the Crusades of the Middle East.



TALK TO US

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Mahatma Gandhi (Durban resident 1893 – 1914)

Durban; a city which has shepherded South Africa's conservation efforts for over 100 years, establishing world renowned wildlife parks and natural world heritage sites on its doorstep.



Food truck bites in Los Angeles

PAST LIFE

Expert Tips on L.A. Food Trucks

Before he kept the *Traveler* office on task, staffer Kevin Kunitake earned his chops on a Los Angeles food truck. Here, he gives pro advice for these meals on wheels.

It's Cleaner Than You Think

Food trucks might be more sanitary than your favorite restaurant. Trucks head to a commissary every night, as required by law, where they are cleaned and prepped to look brand-new each morning.

Enjoy a Side of Culture

The best lunch spot is outside the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Fill up on artwork, order from the line of trucks on Wilshire Boulevard, and then sit on the grass next to parts of the Berlin Wall.

Ignore the Hype

From bacon cupcakes to gourmet dog treats, many trucks cater to novelty over taste. Bypass the kitsch offerings and stick to the long-lived classics, like taco vendors that only appear after 11 p.m.

■ CHECK OUT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE'S L.A. FOOD TRUCKS FEATURE IN THE JULY ISSUE.



SPECIAL EXHIBIT

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ART

For archaeologists and 1980s film buffs, National Geographic Museum's new *Indiana Jones* exhibit is the holy grail. Take an interactive tour through the fictional

ancient villages of Mayapore and Akator, and learn the factual history behind stories like the Ark of the Covenant. View props from the series, then dig deeper with real artifacts from lost cities around the world.

■ OPENS MAY 8 AT THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MUSEUM, IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

WHAT I KNOW



JEFFREY ROSE

ANTHROPOLOGIST

LEADER OF NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPEDITIONS' OMAN TO DUBAI TRIP

Buried Treasure

I visited an Omani friend in 2002, and he took me down to the south, to Dhofar, where I work now. I've never seen anything like it, not to this day. This is a landscape covered with prehistoric archaeology from all time periods. The density of sites is just mind-boggling. It was love at first trip.

The Land Before Time

I love showing people this country. The sultan hasn't turned it into a glitzy commercial center, but has worked instead to preserve and celebrate its traditions. Everything here still smells like frankincense. People wear traditional attire. All the romantic things that drew me to Arabia originally can still be found in Oman.

Beyond the Sea

Since there was never a land bridge in Oman to cross the Red Sea, primitive humans had to have some sort of seafaring technology. It wasn't a time of famine, and it certainly wasn't driven by overpopulation. They just wanted to know what was across the water.

■ VIEW THE ITINERARY AT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHICEXPEDITIONS.COM.

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BEST OF THE WEB

Summer Planning Just Got Easier

Spice up your summer with our “Best Summer Trips” roundup on *Traveler’s* digital hub. Cycle by lake-side route through three Alpine countries, hike Peru’s Inca Trail, or, if you’re not ready to put your skis in storage, master the snowy slopes of Victoria, Australia. Bermuda goes cricket-crazy in these months; clueless visitors can sit in a special section and have a guide interpret the inscrutable game.

■ SAFARI TOURS, SINGAPORE JUBILEE, ENGLAND MAGNA CARTA TRAIL, AND MORE SUMMER TRIP IDEAS ON NATGEOTRAVEL.COM.

URBANITY

SAN DIEGO’S SMARTS

San Diego has beauty and brains. *World’s Smartest Cities: San Diego*, new from the Nat Geo Channel, explores the southern California destination’s energy-saving initiatives, sea life conservation, and diverse population. “San Diego is always thinking ahead—not just how to fix any problems they might have right now, but how to fix problems they might have a hundred years from now,” says host Andrew Evans. “The city never does anything halfway.”

■ CHECK OUT *WORLD’S SMARTEST CITIES: SAN DIEGO* ON THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL.



INSTAGRAM OF THE MONTH

The Joys of Mistranslation

These Samburu women of northern Kenya prove that language barriers can be a laughing matter. Here, they share a chuckle while photographer Pete McBride tries to communicate with them via hand signals.

■ FOLLOW @NATGEOTRAVEL ON INSTAGRAM.



THROWBACK

Sunscreen? What’s that? These 1929 barefoot beach lovers smile at an old-school tanning booth in St.

Petersburg, Florida, taking full advantage of the Sunshine State’s abundant natural resource. Our pick from the National Geographic Society archives.

LONG WEEKEND ADVENTURES

Explore like a local!

National Geographic Adventure editors have picked the top spots to spend a three-day weekend, coast to coast—complete with insider tips from local experts. Here's a taste of the adventures waiting online. **Grab your GORE-TEX® gear and go!**



◆ CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

This history-packed university town puts you in close striking distance of some of the East's greatest wilderness.

Get Out: Hike the Appalachian Trail or Humpback Rocks. Canoe at Beaver Creek Lake Park. Climb a wealth of routes in Shenandoah National Park. Stand-up paddleboard in Mint Springs Valley Park. Bike backroads near Wintergreen Resort.

Eat Up: Breakfast at Bodo's Bagels, lunch at Bizou, dinner at Mas Tapas, imbibe at Devils Backbone Brewing Company.

Bed Down: The Clifton Inn is your go-to for a fantastic meal and world-class luxury in an intimate setting.

Local Tip: Meander gorgeous mountain trails at Secluded Farm or Carter Mountain, adjacent to Thomas Jefferson's plantation manor, Monticello.



◆ BOULDER, COLORADO

With more than 300 days of sunshine and 100,000 acres of wild open space surrounding town, it's no wonder locals here are always up for adventure.

Get Out: Hike to the summit of Mount Sanitas. Climb in world-renowned Eldorado Canyon State Park. Cycle over to Lyons via the Peak-to-Peak Highway. Tube Boulder Creek right in the heart of town.

Eat Up: Grab a sandwich at Cured, or better yet, have them pack a backcountry picnic for a meal with a view.

Bed Down: Recover from your adventures at the St. Julien Hotel and Spa by indulging in a therapeutic massage.

Local Tip: Trek to the top of Green Mountain in Chautauqua Park for an 8,144-foot view over Boulder's iconic Flatirons rock formations.



◆ POINT REYES STATION, CALIFORNIA

Perched on the shore of Tomales Bay, this hamlet's idyllic site makes it a hub for hiking, trail running, cycling, and paddling.

Get Out: Hike unspoiled coastal wilderness (Mount Wittenberg Trail is a winner) in Point Reyes National Seashore. Bike through streams and wildflowers on the Olema Valley Trail. Kayak Tomales Bay, teeming with marine mammal life.

Eat Up: Foodies flock here for everything from fine dining at Sir and Star at the Olema to barbecued oysters served at The Marshall Store.

Bed Down: Experience rustic relaxation at Manka's Inverness Lodge, a 1910 hunter's lodge with luxury cabins.

Local Tip: Courageous expert surfers can't miss the massive swells at Drakes Beach and North Beach. On dry land, drive Pierce Point Road to spot massive tule elk.

PACKING LIST

Pack these GORE-TEX® brand essentials and be ready for any weather your weekend getaway brings.

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View the complete list of long weekend adventures at adventure.nationalgeographic.com/longweekends.



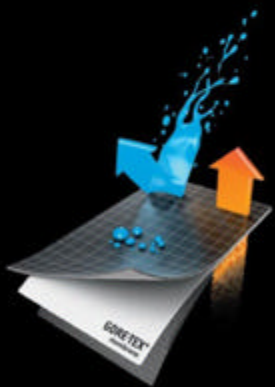
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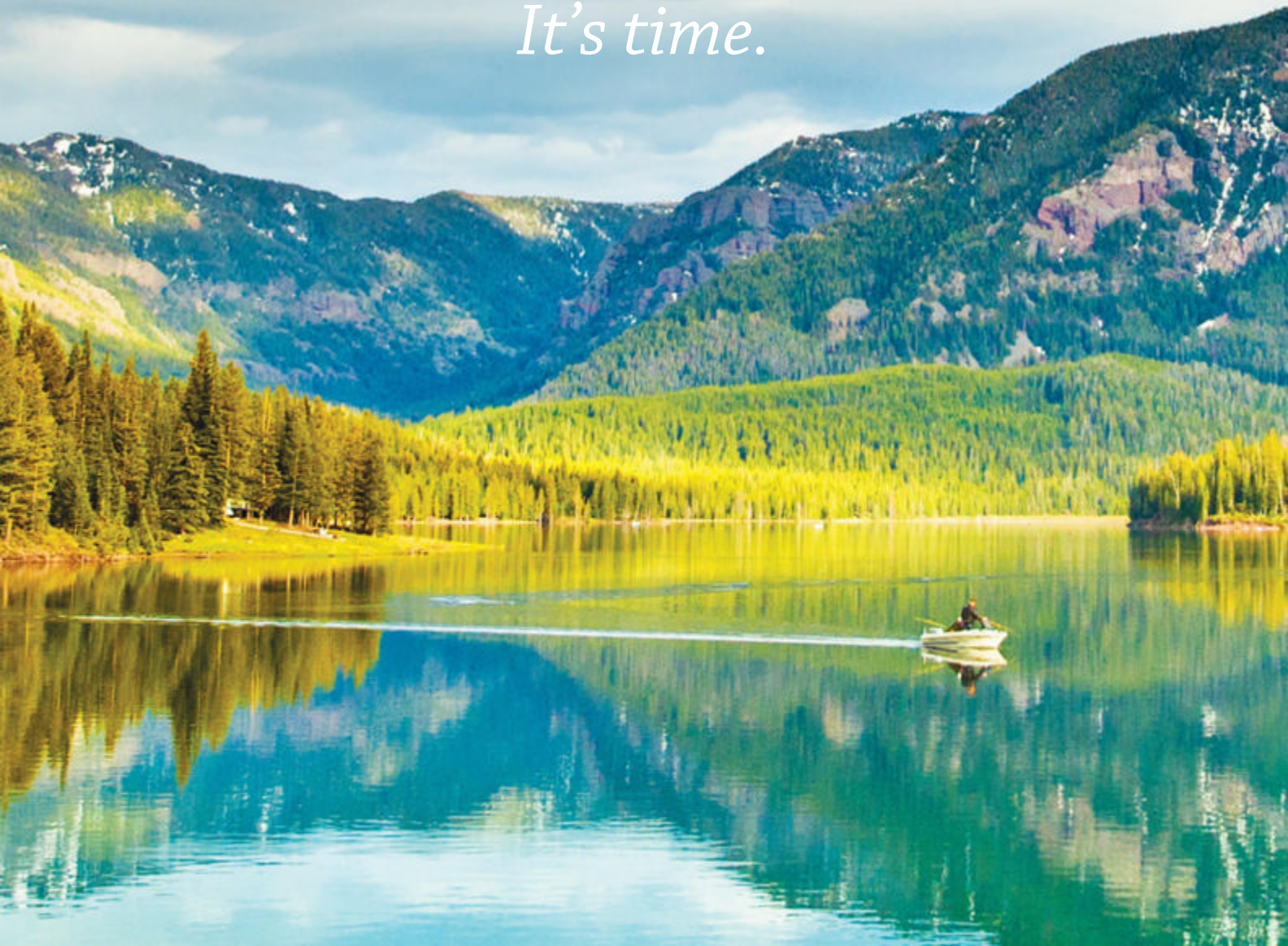
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NAVIGATING THE GLOBE

SMART TRAVELER

The New Rules of Summer

Number one: Take your vacation. It's good for everybody

WANT A RAISE? A performance edge at work? A closer family? Health and happiness? The answer is simple: Take your vacation—all of it. Americans on average leave more than three days of paid leave on the table every year, totaling some 400 million days of unused vacation. That's a lot of coulda, woulda, shouldas. What's more, the cost of being a work martyr is dear. Lost productivity, increased stress, less family time, to name a few. We are here to help. Our 15-step planner is designed to banish flimsy excuses and inspire get-up-and-go gumption. Oh, and by the way, in case you needed another reason to take your vacation: It's good for the economy too. —*The Editors*

Head for
the beach in
southern
California.

PAGE 18



Vacation Like a Beach Boy

Their songs guide a sunny trip through southern California

TIDES HAVE COME and gone since the Beach Boys formed in 1961. But Brian Wilson, architect of the band's signature sound, endures: He turns 73 on June 20. So crank up "California Girls" (50 years old this year) and explore the Pacific coastal stretch from Los Angeles to Del Mar in the barefoot steps of the quintessential boys of summer.

SURFIN' SAFARI

Some of North America's best waves roll at **Trestles**, part of San Onofre State Beach, in San Clemente. Some call it "the Yosemite of surfing." You have to walk a mile to get there. Park on Cristianitos Road and follow the trail to the water's edge. And cast a glance up the hill. There on Calle Isabella stands Richard Nixon's old Western White House, now privately owned.

Meanwhile, at the southern tip of Newport Beach's Balboa Peninsula, **the Wedge** looms. It may be the most loved and feared bodysurfing spot in California—a quick, steep ride that often ends with a slam to the sand.

FUN, FUN, FUN

Del Mar earned a shout-out in "Surfin' USA," but this is one beach town that grew up and got rich. The city shows

off a neo-Tudor architectural theme and hosts two long-standing rituals: the **San Diego County Fair** (June 5-July 5) and the horse-racing season (July 16-September 7).

In Laguna Beach, you can't turn your skateboard without bumping into another artsy summer festival. The **Sawdust Art Festival** erects a three-acre arts-and-crafts village with sawdust paths (June 26-August 30). The **Pageant of the Masters** (July 8-August 31) features tableaux vivants re-creating famed artworks, from Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" to 19th-century Parisian burlesque posters.

I GET AROUND

Redondo, Hermosa, and Manhattan Beaches—each with its own pier—are all connected by the Strand bike path. Find bikes for

rent at **Hermosa Cyclery**.

At the end of the Manhattan Beach pier, the **Roundhouse Marine Studies Lab and Aquarium** displays sea stars and eels. Two blocks inland, cones and frozen bananas await at **Manhattan Beach Creamery**.

Huntington Beach is full of beach style and history. On Main Street, a bronze

statue of surfing pioneer Duke Kahanamoku stands in front of **Huntington Surf & Sport** shop. The Duke would agree with Vince Ray, of the Hermosa Beach Chevron Surf Camp, who says, "Timing the wave—when to get on it—is the hardest thing to teach," but "you get a magical feeling when that wave pushes you."

—Christopher Reynolds



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Where to get your summer licks

NEW YORK, N.Y.

Morgenstern's Finest Ice Cream

This Lower East Side parlor opened in 2014, and the soda-fountain counter has been full ever since. Made in small batches, the egg-free ice cream comes in 40 flavors, including four chocolate varieties (Szechuan peppercorn, bitter, salted, and peanut butter). Try them all in the King Kong banana split.

HALEIWA, HAWAII

Matsumoto

On hot sunny days, Matsumoto doles out about 1,000 servings of Japanese shave ice (*kakigori*) streaked with colorful, home-made syrups in flavors like coconut, lychee, and papaya to locals, surfers, and travelers lined up at the 1951 grocery store along Oahu's North Shore.

CENTERVILLE, MASS.

Four Seas

Located a short stroll from Cape Cod's Barnstable beaches, the venerable Four Seas Ice Cream took over a former blacksmith shop in 1934 to dish up New England favorites such as penuche pecan (based on the brown sugar fudge recipe of local grandmothers) and fresh peach, the Kennedy family's summertime favorite.



**Raspberry
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KEY WEST, FLA.

Kermit's Key West Lime Shoppe

Overlooking the historic seaport, Kermit's colorful corner shop is as green as the famous frog himself. Signature frozen treats include key lime ice cream and dark-chocolate-covered frozen key lime pie slices on a stick.

NORFOLK, VA.

Doumar's

When an ice cream vendor ran out of bowls at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, Syrian immigrant Abe Doumar loaded the cold treat into rolled up waffles, then built the first waffle iron (still in use), and opened Doumar's Cones and Barbecue near Virginia Beach. In 1934, innovative Abe introduced curbside service still provided at the historic diner today.

TRAVERSE CITY, MICH.

Moomers

The annual National Cherry Festival tarts up this Lake Michigan town during July harvest season, but pastoral Moomers always churns farm-fresh ice cream made with milk from its cows; several flavors are studded with northern Michigan black cherries.

—CHRISTINE BLAU



A sylvan sleep at Treehouse Point in the Pacific Northwest

No. 4

Get Out, and Stay Out

Lodge in nature without sacrificing comfort



TREEHOUSE POINT B&B
FALL CITY, WASHINGTON

Backdrop: The western foothills of the Cascade Mountains, beside the Raging River. **Best for:** Couples seeking lofty hideaways and Wi-Fi-free nights. **Creature comforts:** Six hand-built wooden tree houses with quilt-covered beds, large windows, and porches; breakfast of eggs, homemade granola, breads, and fresh juice served in the main house. **Get busy:** Scenic Snoqualmie Falls and surrounding hiking paths are ten minutes away. From \$255 (two-night minimum).



THE HEDGES
BLUE MOUNTAIN LAKE, NEW YORK

Backdrop: Adirondack Park, a recreation wonderland of six million acres filled with forests, lakes, and mountains. **Best for:** Multigenerational families with high-energy tots and teens. **Creature comforts:** Cozy family cabins, adults-only lodge rooms, and bungalows located on the shores of Blue Mountain Lake. **Get busy:** Kayak, swim, canoe, fish, and cannonball off the dock; nightly bonfires with s'mores and weekly bingo are fun at any age. From \$215, including breakfast and dinner.



KESTREL CAMP
MISSOURI BREAKS, MONTANA

Backdrop: The American Prairie Reserve, a wildlife conservation area aiming to become the largest in the lower 48 states. **Best for:** Safari buffs intrigued by America's Serengeti, where pronghorn, bison, and prairie dogs roam. **Creature comforts:** Five plush canvas yurts sport king-size beds, en suite bathrooms, and Montana-themed books. **Get busy:** Naturalists guide bison-spotting expeditions. From \$1,200 per person, including all meals and excursions.

No. 5

Be Better Than a Boy Scout



GOSUN STOVE

Dinner in 20 minutes? The GoSun Stove's evacuated glass tube absorbs and insulates sunlight to get shish kebabs cooked quickly, even on cloudy days, without fuel.



COOLEST COOLER

This icebox on wheels brings the party with a blender, Bluetooth speakers, LED lid light, USB charger, and a built-in bottle opener.



BIG AGNES TENT

Click the button of the Big Agnes "mtn-GLO" tent to turn on LEDs sewn into the ceiling and walls, or retrofit an old tent with a clip-on kit.



GOTENNA PHONE BOOSTER

This portable antenna turns smart-phones into walkie-talkies that send and receive texts via low-frequency radio signal, up to 50 miles apart.

—KATIE KNOROVSKY

NOTE: RATES ARE THE LODGES' PUBLISHED PRICES. INQUIRE ABOUT SPECIAL OFFERS.

ADAM CROWLEY PHOTOGRAPHY (TREE HOUSE); TREEHOUSE POINT (BED); TERRY WILD STOCK (PORCH); AMERICAN PRAIRIE RESERVE (YURTS); GOSUN (STOVE); COOLEST (COOLER); BIG AGNES (TENT); GOTENNA (ANTENNA)

Experience the Fresh, Welcoming Spirit of Northern Ireland



Timeless and contemporary, wild and beautiful, rich in culture and rooted in tradition, Northern Ireland never disappoints. When you visit, your experience is sure to be as authentic, friendly, and full of surprises as the place itself.

Like Nowhere Else on Earth

Wherever you're headed along the scenic Causeway Coastal Route, stop to experience the magnificent basalt pillars of the Giant's Causeway along the sea. This stunning UNESCO World Heritage site is a formation of nearly 40,000 columns, some standing almost 40 feet tall, forged nearly 60 million years ago when molten lava cooled in the ocean waters. It's no wonder much of *Game of Thrones* is filmed in Northern Ireland. Few places on the planet offer such wild and varied landscapes across countryside, cliffs, and coast. Devoted fans can discover the real locations of its fantasy scenes: Stroll through Tollymore Forest Park, overnight in Winterfell, explore Cushendun's caves, or embark on self-drive tours directed by signposts. Nearby highlights include Bushmills, the oldest whiskey distillery in the world, and Derry/Londonderry, famous for its walled city.

In Belfast, take a walking tour of the city. Be sure to visit the impressive Titanic Belfast Visitor Experience on the site of the Harland and Wolff shipyards where the ill-fated ship was built. Get a taste of local Belfast at the lively St. George's Market, where each weekend more than 200 traders sell everything from just-caught seafood to antiques, accompanied by live musical performances.

In Northern Ireland, it's always tee time. Home to champion golfer Rory McIlroy, the region is known for its world-class golf courses, respected as much for their challenging fairways as for their incredible views.

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You never know where the now will find you. As you stroll through the walled city of Derry, enjoy Belfast's vibrant markets and Titanic Visitor Experience, steal a moment on an Irish Whiskey Tour or stand in awe on the majestic Giant's Causeway. That's the promise of Northern Ireland's Causeway Coastal Route. Come and share the now with us.

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— No. 6 — Give Up the Car Keys

Explore laid-back Lopez Island by bike

A RURAL EXPANSE framed by 63 miles of rugged Pacific Northwest coastline in the San Juan chain, Washington State's Lopez Island is big with back-to-the-landers, software moguls, and artists looking for tranquility amid the giant fir trees. Its position in the rain shadow (that's Pacific Northwest-speak for sunnier than Seattle), relatively flat terrain, and a rep for friendly locals—yes, they're waving at you, perfect stranger—make it ideal for cycling. So ditch the car on the mainland, hop a ferry or seaplane, and take a spin on two wheels.



developed by the indigenous Coast Salish. Duck into the tasting room at **Lopez Island Vineyards** for a nip of the coveted island-grown organic wines such as the floral Madeleine Angevine, a grape that originated in the Loire Valley. Enjoy a languid lunch (or dinner) of Shoal Bay clams and chorizo at the **Bay Café**, overlooking Fisherman's Bay.

GET CENTERED

Didn't bring your own ride? Reserve a rental with **Village Cycles**, which will drop off a bike for you at the ferry landing. Warm up with a two-mile pedal south to medicinal herb farm **Whispers of Nature** to walk its labyrinth, clearing your mind of mainland worries and tuning in to the island's neo-hippie vibe.

LOCAL LARGESSE

Once you reach Lopez Village, follow your nose to **Holly B's Bakery** for a marionberry scone. On Saturdays, the **farmers market** showcases the island's generous bounty, from Barn Owl Bakery's wood-fired, organic bread to Papa George's sockeye salmon, caught locally by reef netting, a fishing technique

ART FIX

The island has a thriving community of artists, some of whom sell their work at the farmers market, like ceramicist Nancy Bingham's pottery hand-painted with nature scenes inspired by the Northwest. Find more art and get the scoop on which studios on the island are open at **Chimera Gallery**, a cooperative of local artists that includes glassblowers and botanical illustrators.

SOAK UP THE SCENERY

A long ride due south is rewarded by quintessential Pacific Northwest seascapes. At **Shark Reef Sanctuary**, trace the wooded path on foot to a rocky shore where harbor seals and sea lions lounge in a backdrop of San Juan Channel and Cattle Point Lighthouse. —Margaret Loftus



Clockwise from top: Lopez Island favorites include the San Juan Channel views from Shark Reef Sanctuary, scenic bike rides, moonlit nights, Barn Owl Bakery bread, and a modern summer house.



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South Dakota
GREAT FACES. GREAT PLACES.



Classic canoes on the Allagash River

— No. 7 —

Keep Calm and Paddle On

Off the grid on Maine's Allagash River

TAKE A PAGE OUT of Henry David Thoreau's book, and paddle on northern Maine's remote Allagash River. "Here was traveling of the old heroic kind over the unaltered face of nature," he wrote in *The Maine Woods*, an account of his 1857 canoeing and hiking trip. Today, days still rise and fall with the sparrow's whistle, water lapping against canoe, and the cry of the loon. Canoeing down the 92-mile national "wild and scenic" river to Canada yields wide lakes, waterfalls, Class 1 and 2 rapids, trout-filled streams, and relics from this onetime logging highway, now wilderness waterway.

GETTING STARTED The classic Allagash canoe trip takes seven days, from Chamberlain Lake north to Allagash Village, with 80 rustic campsites along the way. Start those push-ups now to power hours of paddling, often through choppy waters, and a couple of short portages. "The first few days are a huge adjustment for most people, but then the transformation is remarkable," says Lani Cochrane, who runs Greenville-based Allagash Canoe Trips with her husband, a third-generation family outfitter offering guided custom trips.

TRIP OUT Those who want to focus their energy on paddling—not planning—can hire a guide. Outfitters such as Allagash Canoe Trips and Canoe the Wild lead trips that range from four to nine days. Experienced canoeists who want to go solo can rent gear, park at their chosen end point, and catch a ride to one of several put-in spots. "The river is mapped out well and flows north," says Pam Farquhar of Katahdin Outfitters, which provides shuttles and rentals from Millinocket. Before going solo, learn how to keep gear dry, brush up on map-reading skills, and pick up camping permits at an entrance station. "Once you launch, there are no provisions along the way, so plan accordingly," advises Dave Conley, a certified master Maine guide.

SHORTCUTS Favorite four-day routes include Allagash Lake to Chamberlain Bridge—the waterway's wildest segment, complete with ice caves, a fire tower, and an historic tramway to explore—and Churchill Dam to Allagash Village, with Class 2 rapids. Those without white-water experience can pay a ranger \$10 to shuttle their gear around the rapids. —Katie Knorovsky

— No. 8 —

Put Your Nose in a New Book



FED, WHITE, AND BLUE
By SIMON MAJUMDAR

Feasting on Filipino *kare-kare* in L.A. County, roasted chilies in Santa Fe, and BBQ in Nebraska, Food Network celeb Majumdar eats his way across the country, exploring the plates and meeting the people who make the great American buffet.



CABIN FEVER
By MANDY SMITH

Fasten your seat belt! From joining the Mile High Club to coping with a captain's in-flight heart attack, former Virgin Atlantic flight attendant Smith tells all in this fizzy summer cocktail of far-flung travel and high-flying gossip.



THE SUNLIT NIGHT
By REBECCA DINERSTEIN

Two broken strangers meet by chance on a stark, sun-blasted Norwegian archipelago above the Arctic Circle; each has come in search of solitude among the mountains and fjords, but in Dinerstein's poetic debut novel, something else unexpectedly blooms.

—DON GEORGE

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ALWAYS HAVE YOUR CAMERA READY

Summer is as fleeting as a shooting star, so capture family memories as they happen—such as this image submitted to National Geographic's Your Shot website by California mom Genny Salamon. **Getting the shot** Salamon and her family were enjoying the swimming pool at her parents' Los Angeles home. "I noticed that when my son Cas fell in, the water would move out around him, like a liquid crater," says Salamon, a part-time attorney, "and I wanted to capture that moment of impact. To retain the details of the splash, I manually set the aperture so the shot would be underexposed. To me, this shows Cas loving every last drop of summer." **What we liked** "The way the water frames Cas creates an oval portrait that focuses attention on his vivid expression," notes *Traveler's* director of photography, Dan Westergren. "Adding to the kinetic effect is his hair, which looks like an electrified halo." **Summer-photo tips** "Bring a ziplock bag to protect your camera from water and sand," Westergren says, "and if you shoot in the middle of the day, try a polarizing lens to reduce any glare."

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An African lion in the Serengeti

— No. 10 —

Be Kind to Animals

Plan a safari now. Africa's wildlife is waiting

FROM ITS WILDEBEESTS and mountain gorillas to its rhinos and elephants, Africa's iconic animals now face a new and unexpected conservation crisis. Despite the fact that the Serengeti is farther from the Ebola zone in West Africa than New York is from Fairbanks, Alaska, the fallout of the Ebola outbreak continues to wreak havoc—not just for people but also wildlife; not just in West Africa but also across the continent. Travelers have canceled their safari plans in droves, dealing a blow to the ecotourism economy, which forms the backbone of wildlife conservation in parts of Africa such as Botswana and Tanzania. A poll of 500 Africa tour operators by Safaribookings.com, the largest safari booking site, reported declines as steep as 70 percent.

Poachers are filling the tourism void. “One of the few things standing in the way of the possible extinction of endangered elephants and rhinos is tourists who pay to see these majestic creatures in the wild,” says Mark Thornton, founder of the conservation-based outfitter Mark Thornton Safaris. According to the Wildlife Conservation Society, almost a hundred elephants a day are killed for their ivory.

Come on, travelers: Africa needs us. Safari deals abound, with many world-class lodges offering reduced rates that coincide with the strongest dollar in years. Together we can turn the tide in Africa. —Costas Christ

■ FIND OUR PICKS FOR GUIDED TRIPS IN AFRICA AT NATGEO.COM/AFRICA-TOURS-2015.

— No. 11 —

DON'T BE STUPID

Every year, accidents happen at national parks, usually because visitors forget that they're in the wild. Here are four scenarios that actually occurred. Don't let the next one happen to you.

DON'T PLAY NEAR THE EDGE

To scare his teenage daughter on a 1992 trip, a father stood on the guardrail at Grand Canyon National Park and pretended to lose his balance by windmilling his arms, but actually lost his footing and fell 400 feet to his death.

DON'T FOLLOW FLUFFY

A tourist dove headfirst into the scalding 200°F Celestine Pool—one of Yellowstone National Park's 10,000-odd geothermal features—to try to rescue his friend's yelping dog in 1981.

DON'T FEED WILD ANIMALS

A boy picnicking with his parents near Yosemite National Park's Wawona Hotel in 1977 died from a stab wound by sharp antlers after he offered a potato chip to a mule deer.

DON'T HIKE IN HEELS

In order to prevent injuries in Grand Canyon National Park, park rangers at the top of the winding Bright Angel Trail have to remind glamorous tourists that the rocky terrain is a pain for anyone wearing high heels.

—CHRISTINE BLAU



Go Local or Go Home

Stay away from the royal groupies with these offbeat London experiences

CRUISE TO THE ZOO

The London Zoo receives more than 1.3 million visitors a year, but only a few know they can skip the lines and come in via the back door. **London Waterbus** is one of several companies that run cruises along tranquil Regent's Canal—connecting leafy Little Venice with bustling Camden Town—but it's the only one that can let you off (right by the monkeys, sloths, and lemurs) at a private canal-side zoo gate.

SOLD ON SOTHEBY'S

Socialize with London's elite at one of **Sotheby's** regular public sales in Mayfair, by registering online or at the auction house. If you

purchase an item (say, by playing with the paddle too enthusiastically), make arrangements to take it home—atop Sotheby's front door is an Egyptian statue from 1320 B.C. that was sold in the 1800s but never picked up by the buyer.

TOAST THE TELLY

Opened in 1949, **Bar Italia** on Soho's Frith Street is popular for its friendliness, high-quality coffees, and celebrity patrons—look around for David Bowie and Francis Ford Coppola. What's not commonly known about this institution is that just upstairs from where you're dipping biscotti into your cappuccino, a new invention called

television was shown for the very first time in 1926 by Scotsman John Loggie Baird.

HARD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Starting in 1962, when they first moved to the English capital, the Beatles stayed on and off for more than a year at the **President Hotel** in Bloomsbury's Russell Square. (This is before they were “bigger than Jesus”—the tuneful teens were sometimes escorted by their parents.) The hotel is still in business, so die-hard fans can sleep in the same spot where the Fab Four laid their famous mop-topped heads.

THAMES TREASURE HUNT

When the tide is out on the

river, “mudlarkers” rummage along the exposed bed of the Thames in search of bits of pottery, buttons, and other artifacts from bygone days. Give it a go—try the river's north bank near St. Paul's or around the Southwark and Blackfriars Bridges, though anywhere with waterfront access has a chance for some finds. Word to the wise: The tips on the Port of London Authority's website about slippery stone stairs and fast-moving tides are important reading. You'll thank us later.

OUT TO LUNCH

Everyone knows of the specialty food stalls at Southwark's jam-packed Borough Market, but shoppers looking for a local vibe should walk three-quarters of a mile east to Bermondsey's **Maltby Street**. Some of the market's original vendors relocated here to regain a sense of community. It's not as large as Borough Market, but you can nosh on Scotch eggs and sip traditional mead away from tourists.

MURDER MYSTERY

Jack the Ripper hogs all the press when it comes to East London's five prostitute murders of 1888. Discover more about the victims by visiting the **Ten Bells pub** on Whitechapel's Commercial Street—a couple of the unfortunates used to drink and drum up trade here. Then pay your respects a few miles east at the City of London Cemetery, the final resting place of two of the women.



A basket of fresh peas (above) on Maltby Street, artwork for sale (right) at Sotheby's



Stop and Smell the Wildflowers

Try these five outdoor events across America

ALFRESCO CONCERTS

Tanglewood, the world-renowned music festival and summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO), marks two major milestones this year: the 75th anniversary of the Music Center (alums include Seiji Ozawa and Wynton Marsalis) and the inaugural season of BSO Music Director Andris Nelsons. The celebratory lineup includes Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga; Yo-Yo Ma; and the Boston Pops; plus perennial events such as the daylong Tanglewood on Parade, which ends with fireworks.

TANGLEWOOD, LENOX, MASSACHUSETTS, JUNE 20-LABOR DAY WEEKEND

TOUR DE BLOOMS

When Rocky Mountain National Park was established in 1915, Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) members led a campaign to protect, not pick, the wildflowers. Celebrate the park's 100th by joining a free, CMC-led wildflower walk. Certified native plant masters accompany each group to identify the flora, which ranges from the ubiquitous columbine to the rarely seen yellow snow lily, growing in remote reaches of the park.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK, COLORADO, MID-JUNE TO EARLY JULY

URBAN TRAIL EXPLORATION

Named for Chicago's zip code prefix, the 606 is a linear park-and-trail system that links four community parks and four northwest neighborhoods: Wicker Park, Bucktown, Humboldt Park, and Logan Square. Spanning the urban oasis is the centerpiece Bloomingdale Trail, a multiuse skyway built on a former elevated railroad. At the western trailhead, climb the mounded Exelon Observatory for unexpected hilltop views of the flat Windy City.

THE 606, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, OPENS JUNE 6

HOMETOWN FESTIVAL

Staged every five years, Jaialdi is a multisensory bash celebrating all things Basque. At the Basque Block, the cultural heart of Boise's thriving Basque community, sip festival favorite *kalimotxo*, or red wine and Coke over ice; learn the jumping jota folk dance steps; and witness farm feats of strength such as oxcart pulling and hay bale throwing.

JAIALDI, BOISE, IDAHO, JULY 28-AUGUST 2

INNER COWBOY EXPERIENCE

Pony up and chow down at Kansas' biggest Old West fest. Top draws at Dodge City Days include the Roundup Rodeo, Food Truck Wars, and a long-horn cattle drive along Wyatt Earp Boulevard—be sure to sit on the north side for frighteningly close views. This year's festival salutes the 150th anniversary of Fort Dodge, the frontier fort built to protect pioneer wagons traveling on the Santa Fe Trail.

DODGE CITY DAYS, DODGE CITY, KANSAS, JULY 24-AUGUST 2



Hike through flowering fields in Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park.

REPORTED BY
Maryellen Kennedy Duckett

— No. 14 —

MAKE YOUR OWN FUN

Q. My 11-year-old grandson persuaded me to take him to a theme park in Orlando, Florida. Where can we go afterward for some green space? Rent a car and you'll have your choice of natural adventures. How you experience them is up to you: Hang gliders, hot-air balloons, swamp buggies, and zip lines are all available in nearby Kissimmee. Within an hour's drive, Blue Spring State Park offers the chance to see manatees in the wild (no snorkeling), and Wekiwa Springs boasts 13 miles of hiking trails as well as canoe and kayak opportunities. Sandra Ferrarese, concierge at the Four Seasons Orlando resort, suggests packing a picnic and swimsuits for a visit to the springs and notes, "The best time to go is right when they open or late afternoon." Drive farther west and you'll hit Florida's Nature Coast, where river snorkeling, birding, fishing, and a 32-mile historic state trail await.

—Heather Greenwood Davis



■ FOR MORE NATURAL FLORIDA OPTIONS, VISIT NATGEOTRAVEL.COM.



— No. 15 —

Carry Extra Batteries

By CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Q. My smartphone won't last the day when traveling. What to do? First of all, turn off Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and "push" notifications. Dial down your screen brightness, which is another known cause of battery drain, says Shane Broesky, co-founder of the mobile accessories developer Färbe Technik. Limit use of battery-hogging apps that work with GPS (in settings, review which apps use your location). Turn off any extra apps running in the background; go to Android settings or, on an iPhone, tap the "home" button twice and swipe up on unused apps. Better yet, set your phone to "airplane" mode to disable the constant search for a cell signal. This step could also save you from a pricey phone bill. Still running out of juice just as you're ready to post that perfect Instagram shot? Pack a portable charger or a battery case that protects your phone while it charges.

NEED HELP?

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Q. I'm traveling to Europe. Should I change my money before I leave or when I get there? After you land, find an ATM and grab a little spending money. Then use your credit card for big purchases (alert your card provider of travel plans ahead of time to avoid credit freezes). Before you travel, find out if your card incurs surcharges on international transactions or fees for foreign exchanges and cash advances, says Oliver Cook, the head of foreign exchange at HSBC UK. Exchanging dollars at home may sound simple, but the rate isn't typically in your favor. "I would use this as a last resort," says Chris Gaffney, president of EverBank World Markets. If you must convert cash, you can determine if you're getting a good deal by looking for an exchange rate that's closest to the "interbank" rate (aka the wholesale exchange). Just remember that every time currencies change, value is lost.

PAUL NICKLEN/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CREATIVE (MANATEES)



Welcome to Summer in FLORIDA

River otters, nesting sea turtles, and rare birds in brilliant natural settings. Spiny lobster and scallops, from your hands to the dinner plate. Theme parks where zoology meets thrills. Here we go.



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Florida Is for Water Lovers

Chilling on the Ichetucknee

There may be no better way to counter a summer sweat than a baptism in the 72-degree waters of the **Ichetucknee Spring**. Bring a mask and snorkel and explore the world beneath the surface during a leisurely tube ride. If you arrive early in the day, you stand a good chance of spotting a North American river otter. During peak season (Memorial Day through Labor Day), tubers who want to complete the 3½-hour trip must start at the north entrance to the state park. Right off the main parking lot is Ichetucknee Spring, also called **Head Spring**. A tram is available at the south end to bring you back to your car.

The Hunt for Red Snapper

It wasn't too long ago that red snapper had all but disappeared from the Gulf. But today, thanks to sound management, the waters off northwest Florida are "snapper central" and the species is viewed as a conservation success story. During peak season, which varies from year to year, but typically falls during the summer months, it is not uncommon for party boats heading out of local ports to catch their legal limit in a matter of hours. As a result, some local charter boat captains can bank on running two, three, and sometimes even four trips a day to the prime snapper grounds.

Spiny Lobsters: Catch Them If You Can

There is a good reason lobster divers are called "bug hunters." The hardest thing about catching these tasty crustaceans is capturing them. These lobsters can move. With one flip of the tail, they take off in the blink of an eye, leaving a diver bewildered and empty-handed. When the special two-day spiny lobster sport season opens the last Wednesday and Thursday in July, thousands of scuba divers and snorkelers head to the **Florida Keys** hoping to bag their limit before the regular season opens in August. Most of the hotels in the Keys book early, but there are alternatives. **Jupiter, Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale, and Miami** all have good lobstering grounds and a fraction of the divers.

'Tis the Season for Scallops

You can swim, dive, or snorkel to gather these sweet, succulent mollusks, and the effort is well worth the reward. The shellfish are not harvested commercially, so the only way to partake of this Florida delicacy is to catch them yourself. Florida's prime scallop grounds—the **Steinhatchee, Homosassa, and Crystal rivers**—have the perfect mix of salt and freshwater that they need to survive. Scallop season along Florida's gulf coast typically runs from July through mid-September, but exact dates may vary from year to year.

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No spa appointment needed.

Must be the sunshine.

Relax in Florida's great outdoors. It's the perfect place for an adventurer's vacation, where you can pamper yourself in natural springs and bask in nature's beauty.

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Busch Gardens® 12,000 Animals, Countless Thrills

Tampa's ultimate family adventure attraction is home to exotic creatures and wild rides guaranteed to give you plenty of stories to share. It opened in 1959 in west-central Florida, and has grown into one of the most respected zoological facilities in the U.S. today. With more than 300 acres and over 12,000 animals, it is also one of the largest.

At the **Animal Care Center**, a 16,000-square-foot facility, visitors can watch veterinarians in action. The attraction includes a nutrition demonstration kitchen, clinical labs, and treatment rooms, putting guests in the middle of the animal care experience.

While the park has amassed quite the reputation for animal care and interactive experiences, the "amusement" end of Busch Gardens has also garnered a lot of attention. The well-known rides cover a variety of thrills. **Montu**®, **Kumba**®, and **Scorpion**®; **Congo River Rapids**® and **Tanganyika Tidal Wave**; and **Phoenix**® and **SheiKra**® provide everything from twists and turns to soaring upside down and even experiencing weightlessness.

The more recent additions—a triple-launch roller coaster called **Cheetah Hunt**®, and **Falcon's Fury**™, a heart-in-your-throat vertical drop ride—are two reasons why the park hosts millions of visitors each year.

Guests love to watch the lithe cheetahs, the world's fastest land animal, sprint across their habitat. Similarly, the coaster starts off slow but bursts forward at 60 miles an hour before racing down several drops.

Falcon's Fury, a freestanding drop tower, reaches a maximum height of 335 feet, making it the tallest drop tower in North America. Falcon's Fury also made the record books by being the first drop tower in the world where riders pivot 90 degrees and face straight down. Once strapped in, riders will experience about five seconds of free fall at 60 miles an hour, similar to a falcon's steep dive to catch its prey.

VISITFLORIDA.COM

Photos (clockwise from top): Visitors love to watch the lithe cheetahs, the world's fastest land animal, lope and sprint in their habitat; discover all kinds of creatures at Busch Gardens; the triple-launch coaster Cheetah Hunt is a recent addition to the roster of rides. Photos courtesy Busch Gardens Tampa

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Enjoy 2X the Thrills

Take your vacation to new heights and new speeds with Florida's top thrills! Dive facedown at 60mph on North America's tallest freestanding drop tower, Falcon's Fury®, only at Busch Gardens® Tampa. Then, hurtle high and experience weightlessness aboard Colossal Curl™, Adventure Island's newest family thrill slide.

Busch
Gardens®

Adventure
Island®





SeaWorld® Orlando

Get Closer to the Sea

If you don't have time to scuba dive the state's shipwrecks or snorkel the coral reefs of the Florida Keys, there's plenty of marine adventure waiting for you at **SeaWorld® Orlando**. Part theme park, part marine life zoological park, SeaWorld, with its neighbors **Discovery Cove®** and **Aquatica, SeaWorld's Waterpark™**, has something for every member of the family.

You might think you took a wrong turn off the interstate when you enter the **Sea of Shallows**, because all of the buildings look like old Key West. But this is where you will find the creatures that inhabit the state's coastal waters, including sea turtles, dolphins, manatees, and Florida's favorite reptile, the alligator. And be sure to stop and hand-feed the cownose rays. Sea of Shallows is also where **Manta®** is located. It's a seamless blend of up close animal encounters with a headfirst, facedown thrill ride. The only flying roller coaster of its kind in the world, Manta tops the list of don't-miss theme park attractions.

At **Sea of Legends**, guests can embark on a "Journey to Atlantis®," a boat tour that will get your blood pumping. Don't miss **Kraken®**, a floorless roller coaster named after the legendary sea monster of the ancient world.

The **Sea of Ice** houses **Antarctica: Empire of the Penguin™**, where you can meet penguins and experience what it's like to be a flightless bird heading home after a blizzard.

Sharks may be mysterious animals, but at the **Sea of Mystery**, you can get an up close look and learn more about them at **Shark Encounter®** through an almost 85-foot tunnel that immerses you in their environment. After a meal at **Sharks Underwater Grill®**, don't let the kids miss the **Sea of Fun**, with its junior roller coaster, **Shamu Express®**, and water play area.

Another fan favorite is the **Behind-the-Scenes** tour, during which guests are given a firsthand look into the rescue, rehabilitation, and return program. For more than five decades SeaWorld's animal experts have helped more than 25,000 animals in need. **Pacific Point Preserve®** is home to the park's seals and sea lions, and **Dolphin Cove** is where guests can interact with bottlenose dolphins. The nearby nursery, with its newborn dolphins, might overwhelm you with its cuteness factor. The **Shamu Up Close®** underwater viewing pool will give you a different look at the park's biggest stars, the killer whales.

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Photos (clockwise from left): The Shamu Up Close underwater viewing pool will give visitors a different look at the park's biggest stars; experience one of the world's largest underwater viewing tunnels; pretend you're a flightless bird heading home after a blizzard at Antarctica: Empire of the Penguin™; the Blue Horizons show finale. Photos courtesy SeaWorld® Orlando



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Space Coast Birthplace of Natural Wonders

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge is a bird-watcher's paradise. Home to more threatened and endangered species than any other refuge in the continental United States, it provides a safe haven for bald eagle, wood stork, osprey, and the secretive scrub jay.

A gateway to the **Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail**, **Merritt Island** can be explored by foot or paddle. While the refuge offers some of the best hiking and paddling on Florida's east coast, one of the most popular areas is **Black Point Wildlife Drive**—a winding, seven-mile moving observatory where visitors can appreciate rare birds and wildlife in their native habitat.

Afterward, enjoy a stroll on the beach at the **Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge**. Stretching more than 20 miles from **Melbourne Beach** to **Wabasso Beach**, this refuge is one of the largest loggerhead and green sea turtle nesting areas in the Western Hemisphere. Sunrise during the summer is a good

time to walk the beach and watch newly hatched sea turtles as they race to the ocean. Guided walks are available during the nesting season. For the turtles' safety, reservations are mandatory. The nesting season peaks in June and July.

When conditions are right on a moonless night, head to the **Haulover Canal** for the paddle of a lifetime. This is the best place in Florida to observe bioluminescence, or living lights. With every stroke of the paddle, you will see tiny, neon blue-green organisms scatter as you move through the water.

VISITFLORIDA.COM

Photos (from left): Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, one of the largest loggerhead and green sea turtle nesting areas in the Western Hemisphere. Photo by Carol Hansen; sandy beaches of Canaveral National Seashore; take a nighttime kayak trip to see the bioluminescence of Haulover Canal. Courtesy Robert A. McComas Photography, Inc., for A Day Away Kayak Tours



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Encompassing 26 miles of unspoiled beaches and the most biologically diverse estuary in the United States, **Indian River County** is one of the premier natural gems on **Florida's Treasure Coast**. It offers a peaceful respite with an abundance of natural and cultural appeal.

Vero Beach, Fellsmere, and Sebastian are perfect perches for guests wanting to explore the pristine beaches, untouched woodlands, and old Florida orange groves without sacrificing convenience, charm, and the cultural allure of museums, theaters, fine dining, and shopping.

Birders will want to make a beeline for **Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge**. Established as the country's first national wildlife refuge, it provides protection for egrets and other birds nearing extinction. Pelican Island sits in the **Indian River Lagoon**, a uniquely rich estuary that covers about one-third of Florida's

east coast. More than 4,300 different plant and animal species live here. So bring your field guides and notebook and start counting.

Indian River County can also lay claim to a chunk of Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, which protects threatened and endangered sea turtles. **Sebastian Inlet State Park** offers nature lovers access to the refuge, and it is also a draw for history buffs wanting to visit the **McLarty Treasure Museum**, which exhibits relics and artifacts from a Spanish fleet that foundered in the area in 1715.

VISITFLORIDA.COM

Photos (from left): Sebastian Inlet State Park is a draw for nature lovers and a great place to camp. Courtesy Indian River County Chamber of Commerce Tourism Division; the namesake bird of Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge; get out on the water and close to nature in the Indian River Lagoon.

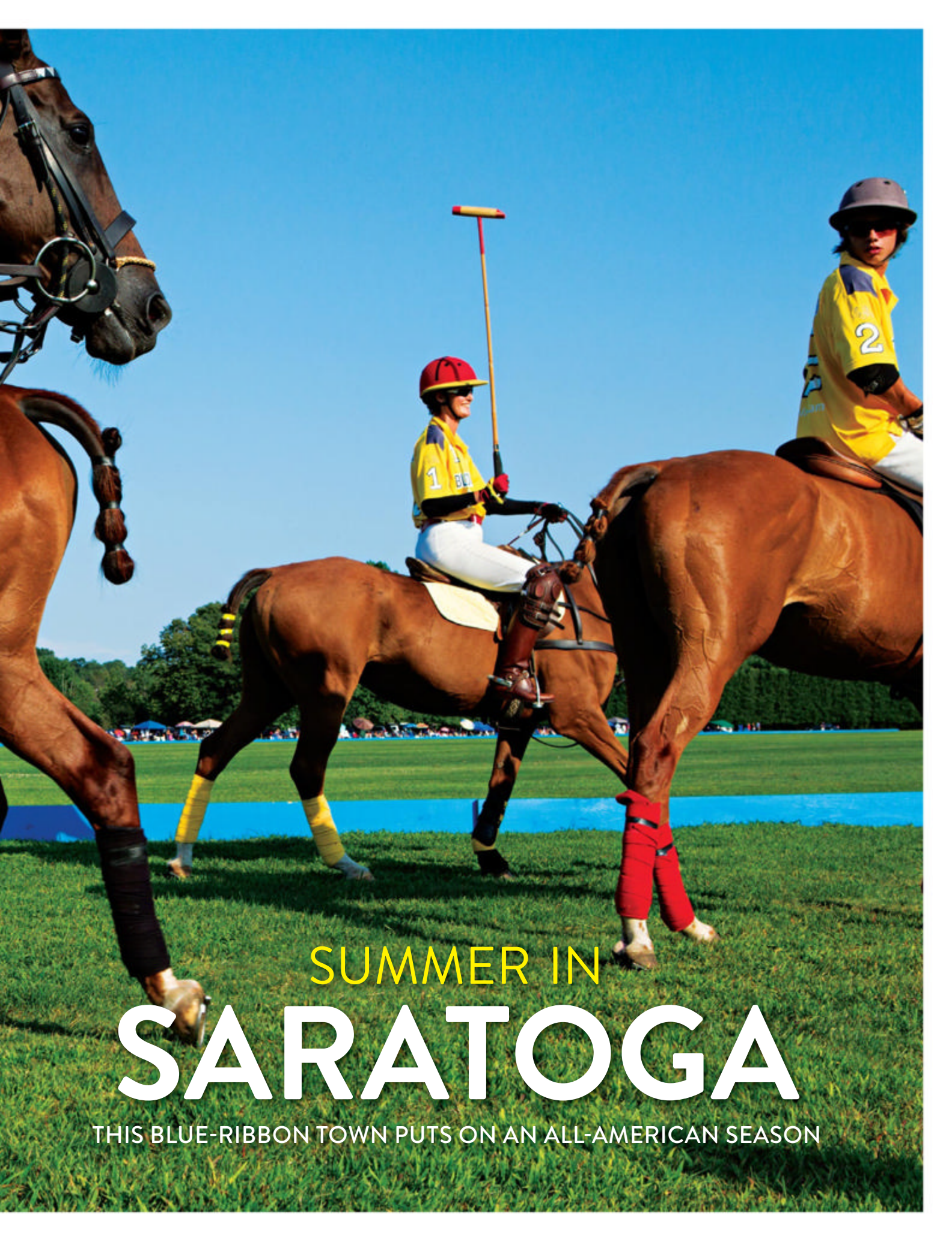


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Saratoga's polo club has hosted matches since 1898. Players often autograph polo balls for kids after the game.



SUMMER IN
SARATOGA

THIS BLUE-RIBBON TOWN PUTS ON AN ALL-AMERICAN SEASON

BY ANDREW NELSON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATT MOYER
AND AMY TOENSING

“This Season,”

my father predicts, “is going to be busy.”

We are sitting, my parents and I, on their big screen porch behind their big house in Saratoga Springs. The lengthening indigo shadows of the oaks promise a cool end to a hot summer day—typical for this upstate New York town where twilight is welcomed by the rattle of ice cubes in heavy glass tumblers.

I’ve come home to reacquaint myself with Saratoga’s perennial summertime explosion of animal spirits and high culture—a continuous round of parties, performances, openings, and horse races that my father, and the rest of Saratoga, refer to in two words: “The Season.” The phrase always tickled me, but do people still talk that way?

They do in Saratoga, which one wag described as being a hundred miles above Manhattan and a century behind it. Thirty-five miles north of Albany, the town occupies the state’s best table: seated below New York’s enormous Adirondack Park and west of Vermont’s Green Mountains. Beneath its streets and the more than 1,000 buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and far below the deepest roots of its oldest maples, water burbles through the subsurface shale, escaping from a Paleozoic-era fault line to emerge as 17 separate, carbonated, and salubrious mineral springs.

Health. History. Horses. Add to that trifecta: tradition. It’s important here. One buys groceries at Putnam Market. Drinks coffee at Uncommon Grounds. Shops the farmers market on Saturday mornings. Pours tea at 3. Mixes martinis at 5. Vodka for my mother. Gin for my father. Dinner follows with bridge, opera, concert, or dance performances. (Saratoga is summer home to both the New York City Ballet and the Philadelphia Orchestra.) A Sunday afternoon string quartet or a benefit at the National Museum of Dance rounds out the week.

I cannot remember a time when my parents did not do this. In their 80s now, they move slowly. “Leaning into the wind,” is how my father describes it. But they are active, vital, and, after busy days, I know to find them on the porch surveying the shade garden’s hostas assiduously nurtured by my mother. This summer evening, I’m overcome by a sharp pang of love for them, for this place and their continuity.

“You adapt,” my mother says of aging. “You accommodate to living in a new way.”

So, too, Saratoga. Popular in the last gilded age, it greets this new age with aplomb. The tourists have returned in droves. New





Big hats and bubbly:
Saratoga socialites
come out for an
annual breast cancer
research fundraiser
at the racetrack.



units of “luxury condos” (are they anything else?) rise downtown, fetching \$650,000 as summer getaways for Bostonians and New Yorkers. The rambling houses along upper Broadway and Union Avenue easily cost double that. A batch of new hotels cluster by the “Gut,” the unglamorous name for a working-class neighborhood on downtown’s back side; the Adelphi, a grand Victorian hostelry, undergoes renovation. Saratoga’s polo team draws tailgaters to Whitney Field. Even old-school Saratoga Water enjoys a fizzy new popularity. The cobalt blue glass bottles appear in upscale groceries across the country.

The tinkle in my mother’s glass returns my attention to the conversation. “She’ll meet you at noon. Be ready. She’s always on time.”

The “she” is my mother’s friend, a local power broker who knows and sees all but enjoys her anonymity. I secretly refer to her as the sachem, an Algonquin Indian word for wise elder. She has promised me background on Saratoga. She’s not known for mincing words.

I could have set my watch. At the appointed hour, the sachem’s Mercedes purrs up the driveway of the Saratoga Golf and Polo Club, a stately Georgian Revival. Since 1896, it’s been the club that matters in a town where it matters a great deal. “Of a certain age,” my hostess sports a chic black-and-white pants suit set off by a carnation-pink trench coat. Men instinctively rise from their chairs when she enters a room. Behind Jackie O shades, she scans the scene as we sweep into the formal dining room overlooking the portico terrace and nine-hole golf course. We sit down to dine on Cobb salads and Saratoga’s history.

She tells me how the “King of the Spas” flourished between the inventions of the railroad and the airplane. Back then, its gambling—at the track and in the Canfield Casino—made it the raciest of the grand old resorts. Newport, Tuxedo, Bar Harbor, none was as saucy as Saratoga. America’s rich arrived en masse. Vanderbilts, Whitneys, Trasks, and Biddles parked their private railroad cars to “take” the waters, quaffing the carbonated liquid from the plashing springs sheltered by ornate pavilions adorned with Victorian gingerbread. They promenaded beneath the porches of the vast Second Empire hosteleries that accommodated them on Broadway, the main street. The Grand Union, which could sleep 2,000, was, by 1876, the largest hotel in the world. They gathered in ballrooms to sip champagne and nibble on frogs’ legs and the latest gossip. But air travel and changing tastes meant fewer and fewer swells arrived each summer. Hotels went from “no vacancy” to “for sale” to abandoned. Organized crime moved in. Saratoga’s canopy of elms succumbed to the Dutch disease. As a Skidmore coed in the 1950s, the sachem and her friends scavenged toilets from the derelict Grand Union Hotel.

“We grew violets in them,” she recalled. “And they did very well indeed. But the town? Dead. Except for one important thing.”

“What was that?” I inquire.

“The ponies,” she replies.

Racing isn’t just Saratoga’s passion, it’s a religious devotion. The Saratoga Race Course opened

in 1863, shortly after the Battle of Gettysburg, and except for a brief spasm of rectitude in 1912 and a short period during WWII, it’s been open ever since—150 years of win, place, and, most important, show. The four-legged thoroughbreds attract human ones. The annual Fassig-Tipton auction, held in a doughnut-shaped building on East Street, recently recorded 114 yearlings sold off for more than \$33 million. It all culminates in the running of the Travers Stakes, a legendary late August race that plays the equine *Iliad* to the Kentucky Derby’s *Odyssey*.

Lunch done, the sachem conducts a tour. In the late afternoon sun, Saratoga’s dense tree canopy glows emerald.

We prowl Broadway, passing a lavish new mansion built by a medical instrument tycoon. “Only \$20 million,” she says. “Just

ONE WAG DESCRIBED SARATOGA AS A HUNDRED MILES ABOVE MANHATTAN AND A CENTURY BEHIND IT.

walking-around money for the Arabs.” Saratoga’s no stranger to them. The sheikh of Dubai built a 106-acre thoroughbred training center with stalls for 96 horses adjoining the racecourse. (The sheikh’s grounds are easily visible from Nelson Avenue behind the racetrack.)

That evening, neck pinched in stiff collar and black tie, I lope through downtown Saratoga’s 32-acre Congress Park, designed by the famed landscaper Frederick Law Olmsted. Fireflies spark the humid night air as 250 well-dressed men and women descend on the stately Canfield Casino, made famous by and named for Richard Albert Canfield, Edwardian bon vivant and gambler. Now a city history museum, it hosts the annual gala for Opera Saratoga, the local opera troupe recognized as one of the best small companies in the country—though it could very well be a celebration of the Saratoga Season itself.

“Saratoga was the Disney World of the 19th century,” local historian Dave Patterson had told me, “the number one tourist destination in the country in the 1870s.” Tonight at this modern fundraiser, I could imagine nothing had changed. The rooms fill with doctors, doers, and social arbiters. An immense oil portrait, easily 25 feet tall, stands at the far end of the room: a picture of Napoleon III, emperor of France, on horseback. It guards the old roulette wheel where bewhiskered robber barons and Victorian libertines like Diamond Jim Brady and actress Lillian Russell once wagered.

My phone shivers in my pocket. It’s my nephew, Connor, texting me from somewhere along the east coast. A rising college senior on his last summer before graduation, he’s been making the most of it: interning during the week and road-tripping weekends. “Hey unc! Will u be in Saratoga for the Travers?”

“Come up!” I keep it short. It’s hard to text and

Saratoga springs eternal (clockwise from top left): breakfast served on the porch at Union Gables B&B; fruit tart at Mrs. London’s Bakery; flower-bedecked homes along Circular Street; naturally carbonated water from Governor Spring, one of 18 public mineral springs in town—each with its own distinct flavor

hold a glass. I move to the long marbled bar and set my wine down. There's a crush here, ordering drinks, and I strike up a conversation with one of Opera Saratoga's performers, Seth Carico, a bass-baritone with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, who flew in to headline with the company where he first began singing as a teenager.

"I always gravitated to the green [forests] and the mountains. I fell in love with them working here," says Carico. "Come see the *Magic Flute*; they're performing it tomorrow."

I agree to do just that. The opera is staged in the Little Theater located in Saratoga Spa State Park, part of a complex of bathhouses and public buildings built by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s as the Monticello of mineral water.

RACING ISN'T JUST SARATOGA'S PASSION, IT'S A RELIGIOUS DEVOTION. AND IT CULMINATES IN THE TRAVERS.

The park was something of a conservation success story. In the last part of the 19th century, private companies purchased the land above the springs, pumping many dry to extract the carbonic gas for newly popular soft drinks. Water was an endangered species. To preserve the remainder, New York State bought out the factories and turned the locale into a 2,200-acre park. Inspired, I decide to book a soak in the Roosevelt Baths, the one remaining spa, tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Mozart beckons me inside. And his music works its magic. Though I can scarcely discern an alto from a tenor, the cast's vocal grace makes it hard to believe a town of just 27,000 inhabitants can support such a production.

As the audience leaves the theater, we're greeted by an electric guitar solo, hugely amplified and bouncing off the great brick buildings. *Whaaaaa-whaa-er-er-ing*. It's the 1980s supergroup Journey in concert, performing at the neighboring Saratoga Performing Arts Center, or "SPAC" as it's been called by Saratogans since it opened in 1966. It may not be the largest open-air venue in the country, but set in a forest glade, it is, in my opinion, the nicest. And the best part: You can listen for free if you set up shop just outside SPAC's fences. Relaxing in lawn chairs on the thickly clovered grass are Karen and Chris Breslin. It's date night. The kids at home, the Breslins sip Bud Lights and listen to a little night music.

Karen, a schoolteacher, loves the town's offerings. "In a Saratoga day, you can climb a mountain, ride your bike, do a concert, and then fall asleep in your own bed."

"THIS ISN'T A 'PLUCK YOUR EYEBROW' kind of spa," Trent Millet, who gives tours of Saratoga's mineral springs, tells me before I book my bath the next day. "This is the only bathhouse in America where you can soak in naturally carbonated water."

Millet describes Saratoga's 17 still drinkable springs the way a wine snob does Pinots, detailing the bouquet and varying

properties of the water. There's Tallulah: "She tastes likes oysters." And Polaris: "For digestion and nervous tension." And even one, named Hathorne, for hangovers.

My soak begins with a meeting with redheaded Coleen Vargus, who leads me down a hall lined with doors before she opens one. New Age music plays. Candles flicker off the subway tiles. Fluffy white towels lie folded. I glance at the water pooling in the porcelain tub.

"What the...?" I step back.

"Yeah, it's the color of my hair," she laughs. The water's tint comes from the iron content oxidizing with the air. She goes on to explain its benefits. It increases blood circulation and cell oxygenation. And trace amounts of minerals like calcium (348.0 parts per million), magnesium (171.0), lithium (6.3), and iron (8.2) enhance your immunity, increase endorphins, and normalize your glands.

"I don't know if my glands need normalization," I say.

"Well," she says, "at least the lithium will make you happy."

Coleen shuts the door. I doff my clothes and sink into the cast-iron tub. The water's amazingly buoyant, and the effervescence tickles in all sorts of places.

After the soak, I get a massage. Not technically part of the cure, it relaxes nonetheless. I don't know if I feel thoroughly renewed, but I do notice the redness on a skinned knuckle has totally vanished.

I return to my parents' house. It's too quiet. "Mom?" I call out. "Dad?"

There's a note on the kitchen table. It reads: "Mother fell. At urgent care." When I was five and trying to dig a hole to China in my backyard, I hit a yellow jacket nest before discovering the Middle Kingdom. Stung, scared, I ran to find my parents. I'm halfway up the highway to the emergency room, when I realize nothing changes. We are still running to them.

They are in the lobby, sitting together. A welt rises across Mom's nose. I sink down next to her. My hand works its way into hers. Neither of them is upset. They look at me quizzically.

"It's nothing," she says. "I tripped over a sprinkler head gardening."

"We're fine," Dad says in his brook-no-debate voice.

Yes, but the next time? I see my five-year-old self in the corner. He says nothing.

TRAVERS WEEKEND ARRIVES in a clot of traffic as 40,000 race enthusiasts descend on Saratoga, to gamble, eat, drink, and do it all over again. "The Travers is our busiest time," says bartender Max Ahearn, when I stop at Sperry's, a Caroline Street restaurant with a long patio bar, to get out of the crush. "We'll be six-to-eight deep at the bar going seven days this week." Connor and his friend Jake Herendeen tumble in, bucking with excitement. To millennials, Saratoga's historic racetrack with its throngs of bettors, horse breeders, and day-trippers exudes an elusive glamour, one impossible to Snapchat or tweet.

"It's being part of a tradition," Connor explains. "You can't replicate it. You have to experience it."

We will. In style. I've gotten seats for us at the grandstand's clubhouse near the private boxes. Those are no plush,



Key trappings on race day include binoculars, coats, and ties. Below: Horses are off and running at Travers Stakes weekend, climax of the Season.





Before all the high spirits and the high stakes of a race, early morning captures a serene scene of horse and groom.

climate-controlled NFL sky salons, either. Saratoga's boxes are wooden, understated, and open to the air. In the pine groves down behind the grandstand, anyone moving quickly enough can command a picnic table and some shade. In an era of Escalades and escalating inequality, this is the increasingly rare American spectacle, where we all can rub shoulders or lose our shirts.

I'm intent on keeping mine. And it's going to be a nice one. Saratoga's tradition has you dress up for the races. That means colorful dresses and wide-brim hats for the ladies. For gentlemen, it's a suit, or, at least, a blazer and maybe hats, too. At Hatsational, a Broadway hatter, Connor selects a nice pork pie that will complement his madras plaid blazer. Jake sports seersucker, as do I. We look like a trio of wise guys. But it's part of the show. As we get ready to leave, my father, no slouch in the grooming department, appraises his grandson, reaching out to tug down his lapels.

"You guys look good," he says, slipping Connor some bills. "Bet on Mrs. Whitney's horse, Viva Majorca."

It's a tribute. Marylou Whitney, 89, from one of America's legendary fortunes, reigns as Saratoga's queen. Over the years she's used her considerable clout to help Saratoga, giving money to a host of local organizations when it could make a difference during the leanest years.

"Could have done nothing," the sachem told me. "Instead she saved the town."

As the sun warms the grandstand's slate roof, we find our

table. The familiar bugle blows, and "The Call to Post" floats across the course. The crowd leans forward, and the Travers races begin. The horses, coats gleaming, appear to fly even as their hooves thunder down the track. Connor, Jake, and I feast on lobster rolls and \$5 bets. We win. We lose. (Sorry, Mrs. Whitney.) But who cares? The crowd's rising mood is convivial, flushed, and thirsty—hardly the pinched restraint one might expect at Ascot or Longchamps. This is an American racetrack in an American August, and anyone can play. Just embrace tradition and accommodate to the age.

That's the secret to Saratoga, I think, drinking champagne and watching the ladies negotiate the port-o-potties at Siro's, a famed post-race watering hole. Their hat brims, alarmingly, are wider than the narrow plastic doors. For all the snobbery that trails in money's wake, Saratoga's got a different view. Class, no matter what your background or wallet, is what counts here. And that's as open to anyone as Mrs. Whitney's box seat is to the golden afternoon air. My father put it best.

"Saratoga?" he says later, after the crowds have dispersed, and we sit once again on his large screen porch. "It's like me. Old, full of history, but still young at heart, I hope."

"Now—" he rises, "can I freshen your drink?"

New Orleans-based **ANDREW NELSON** teaches journalism and social media at Loyola University. This is the first joint *Traveler* assignment for **MATT MOYER** and **AMY TOENSING**, who live just south of Saratoga in the Hudson Valley.

THE INSIDER

Saratoga Springs, New York

THE SPA CITY is no stranger to strangers. The town has welcomed visitors for three centuries, ever since the Algonquian people settled the area and the British erected Fort Saratoga in 1691 on the Hudson River's western bank.

WHAT TO DO

Small town Saratoga's cultural offerings are city-size. The **National Museum of Racing** devotes itself to thoroughbred horse racing. The **Saratoga Automobile Museum** celebrates the conveyance that put most horses out of business. The **National Museum**

of Dance features a hall of fame for artists of both classical and popular dance.

Wealthy New Yorkers Spencer and Katrina Trask owned the 55-room mansion **Yaddo**, which became famous as a home away from home for a roster of artists, writers, and composers including

Aaron Copland, Sylvia Plath, Truman Capote, and David Foster Wallace. The public is allowed to visit the estate's lush rose gardens.

WHERE TO STAY

Saratoga's old resort hotel the **Gideon Putnam** (from \$109) is seeing competition from a host of new hostels, from a **Hampton Inn** to a **Courtyard by Marriott**. Two grand inns—the **Batcheller Mansion Inn** (from \$149) across from Congress Park and **Union Gables** (from \$115)—re-create the feeling of America's premier Victorian resort town.

WHERE TO EAT

The **Thirsty Owl** offers Finger Lakes wines with seafood-leaning tapas. **Maestro's** delivers hearty, fine dining downtown. **Hattie's** is famed for its fried chicken, and the **Triangle Diner** features classic diner fare. **Caffe Lena** is a 1960s-era coffeehouse with a music stage that hosted Bob Dylan. In the season, horse race insiders breakfast on bacon and eggs at the track's **Porch of the Clubhouse**.

WHERE TO SHOP

Gilded first editions; rare art books; and colorful prints of ponies, birds, and 19th-century Saratoga swells are stacked to the rafters at **Lyrical Ballad Bookstore**. Located in an English basement just off Broadway, the bookstore and its



treasures evoke the resort's colorful past.

Preppie pink and green are arguably Saratoga's official colors—visible at the racetrack and the polo field. The hues have their heyday at the **Pink Paddock**, which sports Lilly Pulitzer designs as well as some men's offerings.

WHAT TO READ AND WATCH

High society and Saratoga are literary pals. Edith Wharton's last novel, **The Buccaneers**, opens at the Grand Union Hotel. The most famous book set in Saratoga Springs is Edna Ferber's 1941 novel **Saratoga Trunk**, concerning the adventures of a Creole woman in 19th-century society. The novel was the basis for a 1945 movie of the same name starring Gary Cooper and Ingrid Bergman. James Bond

shows up in Saratoga to fix a horse race in Ian Fleming's **Diamonds Are Forever**.

ATLAS



A full-size bronze statue of the 1930s thoroughbred superstar Seabiscuit stands outside the Racing Museum on Union Avenue.

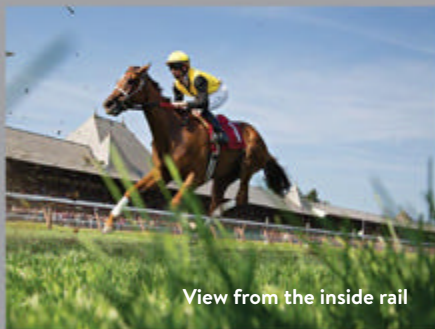
Solomon Northup lived in Saratoga, playing his violin in its grand hotels, before being kidnapped and sold into slavery. He later wrote **Twelve Years a Slave**.

David Hyde Pierce, who portrayed Niles Crane in the hit NBC sitcom **Frasier**, is a native son.

BEHIND THE SHOT

OFF TO THE RACES

"Most horse racing images you see have an unobscured view of the track," says photographer Matt Moyer. "But with this picture [below], I purposely tucked the remote-controlled camera down among blades of grass. That foreground element helps to place you in the scene." Moyer first photographed the Saratoga races as a 19-year-old college intern at a local newspaper. He says that although he had special access to get this shot, "anyone can go to the winner's circle at the end of the race, or the paddock before the race, and get pretty close to the horses and jockeys."



View from the inside rail

Man up: lofty views of
the Rockies from the
Keyhole formation on
Colorado's Longs Peak

ADVENT

A man in a green jacket and dark pants stands on a rocky mountain peak, looking up at a large, jagged rock formation. The sky is blue with some clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow on the rocks.

TURES IN WONDERLANDS

DON'T JUST SEE THE WORLD, SEIZE IT.
16 WAYS TO RAFT, HIKE, AND CLIMB YOUR
WAY INTO EARTH'S BEATING HEART

BY KATE SIBER

Big fish: up close with a
whale shark in the Sea of
Cortez, off Mexico's Baja
California peninsula

GO DEEP

OUTSIZE ENCOUNTERS IN THE OCEANS AND UNDER THE EARTH



Swim With Whale Sharks

Goosebumps. That's what snorkeling near a bus-size shark can get you. Floating on the surface of the Sea of Cortez off the coast of Baja California, in Mexico, you see nothing but shades of aquamarine water below. Then, a shadow emerges from the deep, and the outline of a huge whale shark looms into view: the unmistakable dorsal and pectoral fins, the square head, and the powerful crescent-shaped tail. Even though these ancient fish are plankton eaters, your skin still prickles as they approach. Swim as fast as you can as the largest fish in the sea, graced with unique patterns of stripes and dots, glides by. In a matter of moments, it disappears back into the deep blue.

MORE ACTION

Dive the Great Barrier Reef The world's largest reef clings to the northeast coast of Australia like a 1,250-mile coral parenthesis, with arguably the greatest diversity of dive sites on the planet. Hover among dwarf minke whales, sharks, and manta rays, and browse wrecks haunted by sea turtles.

Descend Into Mammoth Cave In Kentucky, the longest known cave system in the world boasts chambers big enough to fit a symphony orchestra, waterfall-like flowstone formations, and giant pillars that look like ancient shrines.

Hike the Zion Narrows The Zion Narrows, in Utah, is often dubbed a natural cathedral, for its soaring red-sandstone cliffs and the almost spiritual reverence its voluptuous curves inspire. Most visitors walk up the canyon a couple of miles, experiencing sections as narrow as 30 feet, and then turn around, but for a more secluded experience, start at the top of the canyon and hike the whole 16-mile stretch in one or two days.

DELVE INTO DATA

20

TYPICAL WEIGHT, IN TONS,
OF A WHALE SHARK

2,900

THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL AND
FRINGING REEFS THAT MAKE UP
THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

400

MILES OF MAPPED PASSAGEWAYS
IN MAMMOTH CAVE

190

AGE, IN MILLIONS OF YEARS,
OF THE NAVAJO SANDSTONE
IN THE ZION NARROWS

BRANDON COLE (WHALE SHARK), ETHAN WELTY/AURORA PHOTOS (MOUNTAINS, PREVIOUS PAGES)

Go Wild on the Pacific Crest Trail

The PCT is reveling in the spotlight, thanks to the memoir of one devoted through-hiker, best-selling *Wild* author Cheryl Strayed. But there's only so much a book—or movie—can reveal about a 2,650-mile route that stretches from Mexico to Canada and beelines straight through some of the West's most bewitching landscapes. Passing rolling desert, granite peaks in the Sierra Nevada, glass-still lakes in Oregon, and Washington's rounded volcanoes, hikers gain a visceral sense of scale. "You go back to the simplest form of living, and you realize that everything you thought you needed to survive, you don't," says April Sylva, a long-distance hiker who completed the trail last year. "You start to see the world and humanity in a different way—with a whole new appreciation."

MORE ACTION

Bicycle Around Iceland Along the 830-mile Ring Road that circumnavigates Iceland, cyclists encounter all of this country's spectacular extremes, from glaciers to geysers; immense black-rock moonscapes to booming waterfalls; and glacial pools bobbing with blue icebergs to wilderness hot springs just big enough for two.

Horseback Ride Mongolia On a trip through the Mongolian steppes, horseback riders meet nomadic herders, visit a 16th-century monastery, and listen to the sound of traditional Mongolian throat singing.

Sea Kayak British Columbia It's impressive to see the old-growth rain forests, ragged granite shorelines, and clear shallows of British Columbia's sparsely populated coast from the vantage point of a kayak. But it's hard to beat the moment when you lock eyes with a curious orca emerging within feet of your kayak and disappearing into the water as gracefully as it came.





Hardcore detour:
side trip off the Pacific
Crest Trail to South Lake
Tahoe, California

FAR

THE BLOOD PUMPING

RUNNING THE NUMBERS

5

NUMBER OF MONTHS
IT TAKES TO WALK THE ENTIRE
PACIFIC CREST TRAIL

323,000

POPULATION OF ICELAND,
AN ALMOST EMPTY COUNTRY

603,909

MONGOLIA'S TOTAL AREA, IN
SQUARE MILES, MOST OF WHICH
IS GRASSLAND AND DESERT

14

PERCENTAGE OF PROTECTED
LAND IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



Under the volcano: hiking
the ever active Mount
Stromboli, in Sicily's
Aeolian Islands

GET HIGH

YOU'RE ON TOP OF THE WORLD AND YOU KNOW IT (AND YOU FEEL FINE)

TALLY IT UP

2,000

NUMBER OF YEARS SCIENTISTS
ESTIMATE STROMBOLI HAS BEEN
CONTINUOUSLY ERUPTING

58

NUMBER OF NAMED PEAKS OVER
14,000 FEET IN COLORADO

200

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF
STRUCTURES AT INTRICATELY
PLANNED MACHU PICCHU

3,000

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF
GLACIERS IN NEW ZEALAND

Climb Stromboli

Only rarely does the fiery inner soul of the planet reveal itself—except on Stromboli, one of Sicily’s Aeolian Islands that spews lava almost constantly. Just before sunset, hikers pant up over 3,000 vertical feet of heather, fragrant herbs, and black ash to a perch right above the crater. There, amid the swirling green gases, the volcano bursts into action every two minutes to two hours with an explosion of hot glowing lava that, at times, arcs over 1,200 feet into the air. “You cannot believe what you are seeing,” says Lorenzo Russo, a guide for Magmatrek, a hiking outfitter. “It is one of the most incredible natural spectacles. People are speechless, then they all say ‘Wooooooooooooow.’” After the fireworks, skid down soft black ash as the light fades over the Mediterranean.

MORE ACTION

Summit Longs Peak At no later than 3 a.m., start ascending the 4,885-vertical-foot, 7.5-mile Keyhole Route to the top of Colorado’s Longs Peak. After negotiating giant boulders and steep granite faces, climbers arrive at the 14,259-foot apex before afternoon thunderstorms tend to roll in—the only window of time to take in Rocky Mountain National Park’s sun-drenched glory.

Trek the Salkantay Route Every year thousands hike the Inca Trail to see Machu Picchu, but only a few choose the newer alternative route: the Salkantay. Wind 39 miles around 20,000-foot peaks, cloud forests, and coffee plantations for views of the storied mountain ruins in mist.

Tread on a Glacier On a three-day Ball Pass Crossing trek in New Zealand’s Southern Alps, hikers maneuver scree and meadows to see Tasman Glacier up close. An easy shortcut: Take a helicopter or ski-plane.

SAFFO ALESSANDRO/SIME/ISTOCK PHOTO

Raft the Zambezi

There's at least one thing more exciting than feeling the rumble of 355-foot Victoria Falls: riding all of that water as it funnels into a gorge studded with boulders and menaced by drops. This stretch of the Zambezi River, on the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia, is considered some of the best white water in the world. "It's an amazing journey and for some a life-changing event to be in wilderness like this," says Matt Gontram, a raft guide and owner of outfitter Global Descents. Over six days, catapult into wave trains that top 30 feet and rush churning pools of white and green. Watch as wild animals—hippos, crocs, baboons, and vervet monkeys—parade by in the water and on the shores and giant basalt cliffs tower into the sky.

MORE ACTION

Bobsled/Skeleton Lake Placid

Wedged between a professional driver and a brakeman, novice bobsledders careen around ten turns at the Olympic Sliding Center, in Lake Placid, New York, reaching speeds of 60 miles per hour and g-forces in excess of two. Too tame? Pilot your own skeleton with your chin mere inches from the ice.

Paraglide the Tetons Visitors can rock climb up, ski down, or hike around Wyoming's piercing Tetons, but nothing compares with the view from the air. Access your inner falcon on a tandem paraglider ride that rises to over 10,000 feet.

Witness the Northern Lights In the wilds beyond Tromsø, Norway, cross-country ski or ride in a reindeer-pulled sled to watch arcs, curtains, and bands of greenish light tango across the sky.

UP FOR MORE?

Visit adventure.nationalgeographic.com or pick up the *Adventures of a Lifetime* special issue on newsstands in June.

THE WOW INDEX

12,800

HIGHEST VICTORIA FALLS FLOW
EVER RECORDED, IN CUBIC
METERS OF WATER PER SECOND

85

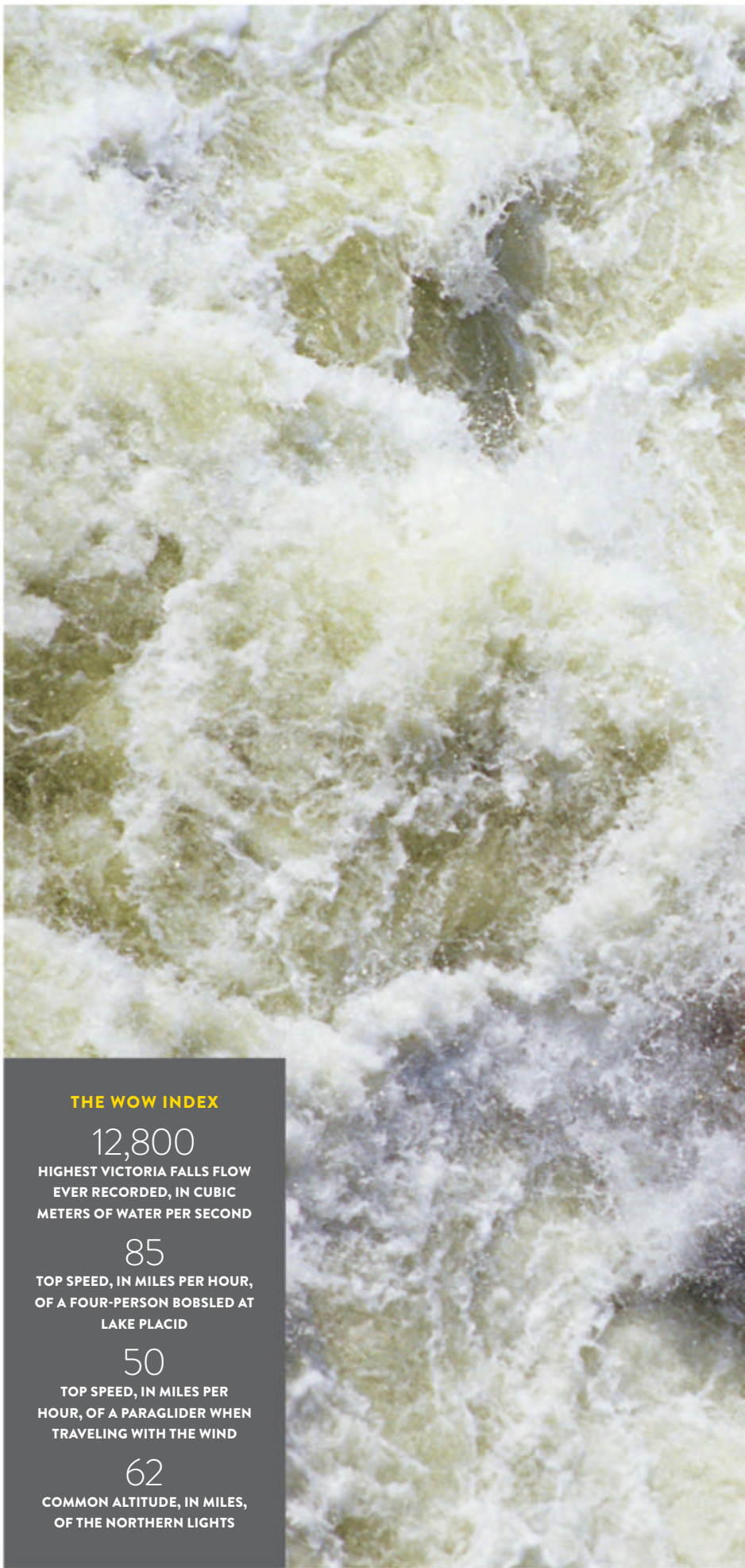
TOP SPEED, IN MILES PER HOUR,
OF A FOUR-PERSON BOBSLED AT
LAKE PLACID

50

TOP SPEED, IN MILES PER
HOUR, OF A PARAGLIDER WHEN
TRAVELING WITH THE WIND

62

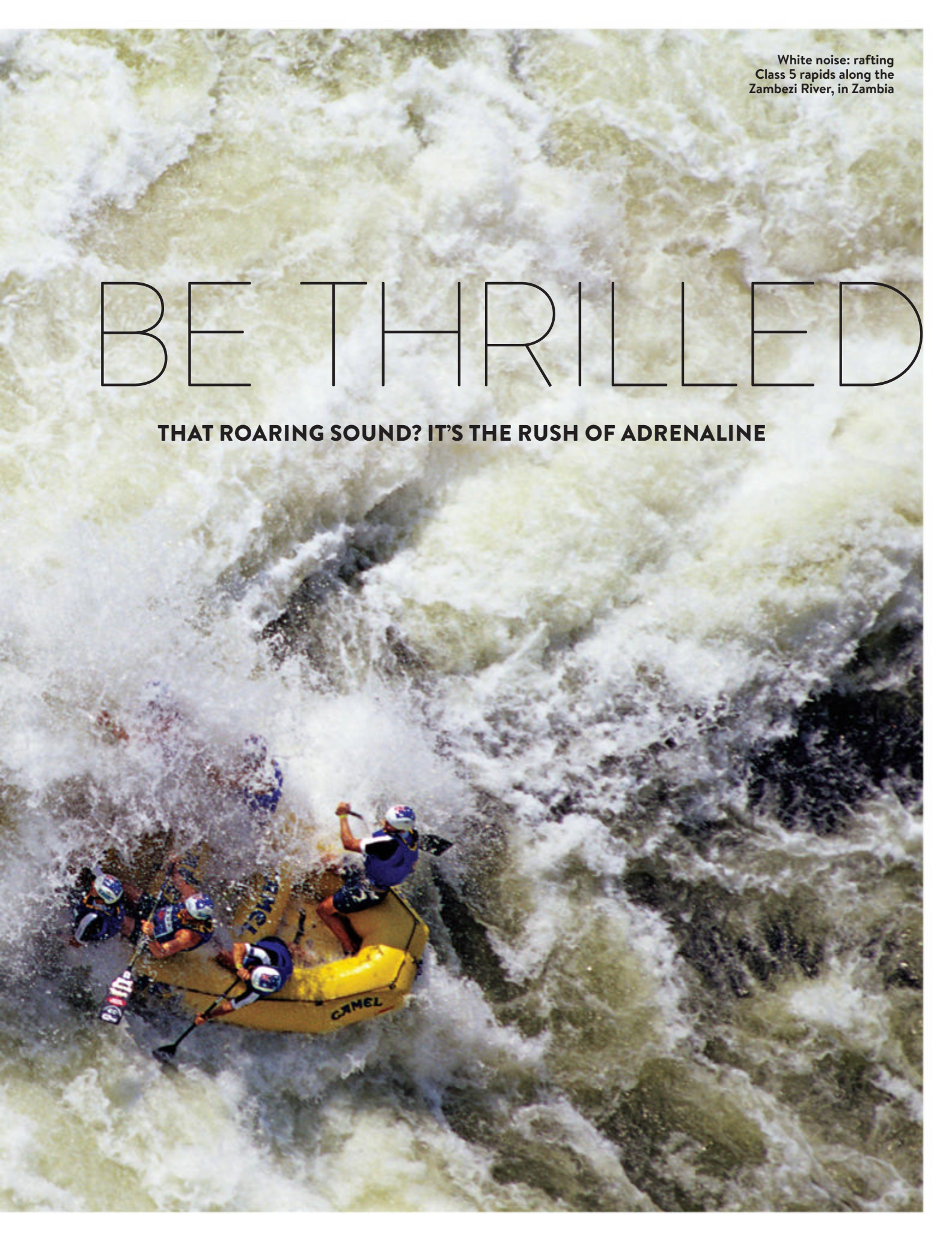
COMMON ALTITUDE, IN MILES,
OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS



White noise: rafting
Class 5 rapids along the
Zambezi River, in Zambia

BE THRILLED

THAT ROARING SOUND? IT'S THE RUSH OF ADRENALINE





BY LORENZO CARCATERRA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MASSIMO BASSANO

LOVE STORY

*She wants one last journey, to a place of peace
and beauty. He brings her to Italy, to Lake Como*







My wife was walking

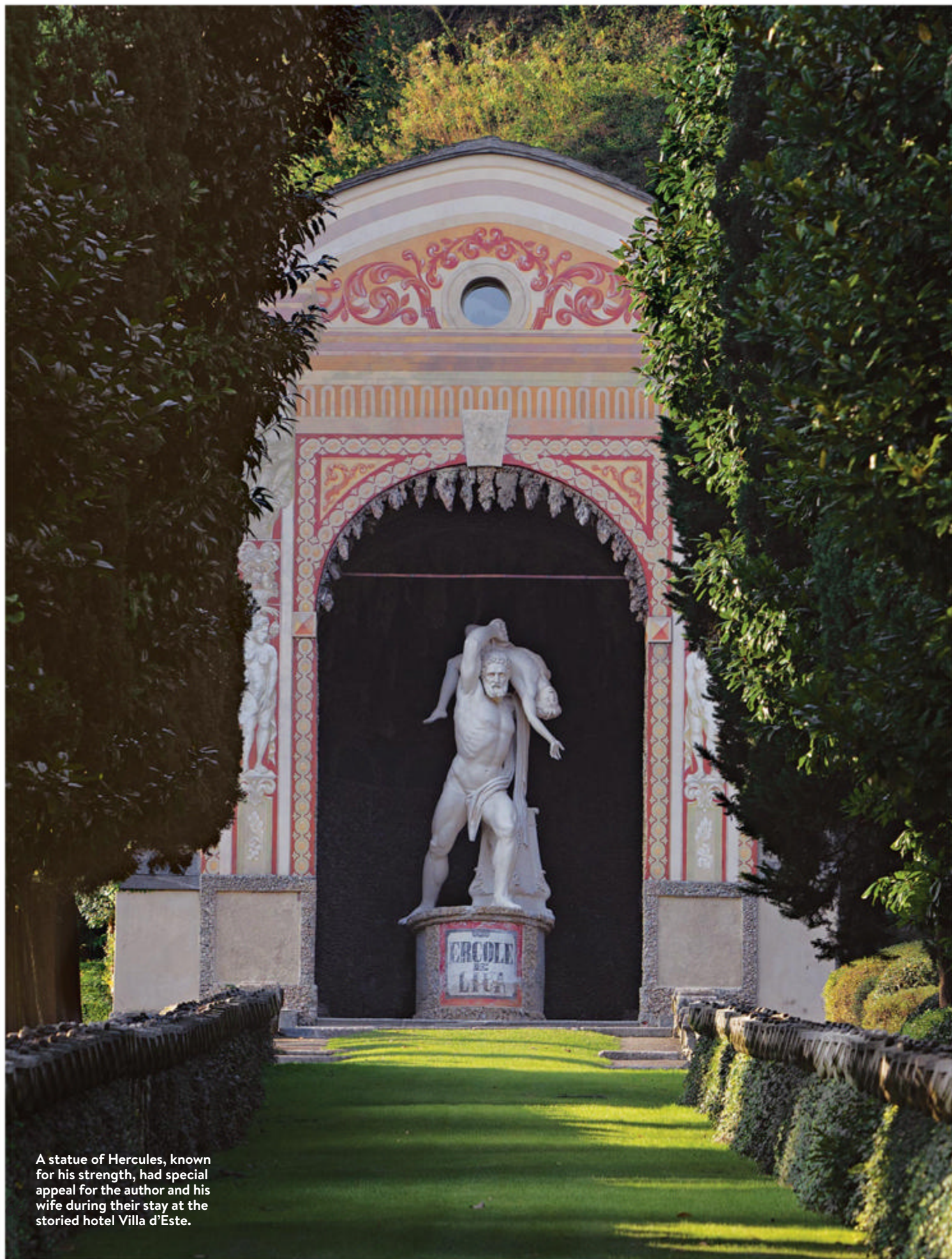
through hell and longed for a piece of heaven. So I transported her to the most beautiful place I could think of—the Italian paradise of Lake Como. ¶ Susan was in the second year of a fight for her life—stage four lung cancer—and we knew there was no way she would come out of it with a victory. The diagnosis had hit her, had hit us, without warning, then led to the inevitable progression of surgery, chemo treatments, and so many prescription meds that we needed a legal pad to keep track of them all. Yet Susan regained her balance quickly, as was her way, declaring she'd live however many days were left her as fully as she could. She continued to work, travel, see friends, and embrace family. She was confronting this final battle on her terms. Cancer would deal the lethal blow, but she was going to do everything in her power to deflect it as long as she could.

“WATER IS GOD’S TRANQUILIZER,” Diana Vreeland, the legendary editor of *Vogue* magazine, once said—words Susan cited regularly. If ever we needed tranquillity it was now, and Lake Como, ringed by quiet towns, elegant vacation villas, and snow-crowned mountains, offered the perfect mix of scenery, culture—and views of God’s tranquilizer.

“This will be great,” I say as Susan and I make our plans. “Eat, look out at the lake, converse, look out at the lake, stroll, look out at the lake. By day two we’ll just look out at the lake—and be the most relaxed we’ve ever been.”

Forming an upside-down Y an hour’s drive north of Milan, Lake Como has seduced visitors since Roman times with its extravagant natural setting in foothills of the Alps, subtropical climate (palm trees, at the same latitude as Maine), thermal springs, and, later, grand villas. I already knew we’d stay at perhaps the best known of these, the tony Villa d’Este.

Antipasti cover a garden table at the restaurant Locanda dell’Isola Comacina. Preceding pages: A villa hugs the shore of Lake Como.



A statue of Hercules, known for his strength, had special appeal for the author and his wife during their stay at the storied hotel Villa d'Este.

Which is what we're looking for as we pull into Cernobbio, a vintage resort town on Como's southwestern shore. The lake, walled by steep mountainsides, glitters under an afternoon sun. We drive the Via Regina ("queen's way") past the 19th-century Villa Erba and the town's small historic center, and turn right at the sign for the resort. Before us, baronial buildings and pavilions—including the sumptuous main residence, built for a 16th-century cardinal—have arranged themselves along the lakefront, punctuated by gardens filled with palms, plane trees, cypresses, and flowering plants. A whiff of camellias soon has us ambling curved walking paths in search of its source, the clear blue waters of Como to our right, embraced by sloping mountains thick with greenery.

I reach over and take my wife's hand. She turns toward me and smiles, then gently rests her head against my shoulder.

"This," she purrs, "is the most peaceful place. I could stay forever." I nod and hold her hand tightly.

We both know that for Susan, forever is just a few short months away. Ours has been a long relationship, 37 years. We began as friends, lived together for two years, and have been married for more than 30, raising two children in the process. We've had our ups and downs, but even our occasional separations were interspersed with many glorious days and nights. Through it all, we've remained what we'd been from the very start—each other's best friend.

Susan's illness froze me. I couldn't hide from the dark cloud the disease brings with it. I stopped writing and withdrew, confused and angry about the plight of my wife, my friend. We had always valued honesty and used humor as a shield against any obstacle. But would either be enough to weather the severe storm she faced?

"Let's take a trip," Susan had said one morning, washing down a dozen pills with a smoothie. "I want to get one more trip in while I still can."

"Should you check with Dr. Rieli first?" I asked.

She shook her head. "Just plan it soon," she answered.

"Where do you want to go?"

"Someplace that can make me forget I'm dying," Susan said.

"IS THERE A LAND OF SUCH SUPREME and perfect beauty anywhere?" 19th-century American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wondered after a visit to Lake Como. The area inspired Hungarian composer Franz Liszt to declare, "When you write the story of two happy lovers, let the story be set on the banks of Lake Como."

And so we set our story here; we both know this trip will be the last we take together. Susan, of course, is determined to make the most of every moment. We'll walk the acres of gardens at Villa Carlotta, north of Cernobbio in Tremezzo, where the lush plantings, marble sculptures, and blooming flowers make us feel as if we've dropped into another century, a more peaceful time, in a place where neither death nor disease dares enter. We will dine at Il Gatto Nero ("the black cat"), a mountaintop

restaurant decorated with artworks of cats and boasting views of the lake that seem to extend to eternity. We'll ride the boats that operate as buses, transporting locals and tourists from Varenna, midway up the lakeshore, west to Menaggio, then south to Bellagio, "the pearl of Lake Como," where I will want to buy a bracelet each for Susan and our daughter, Kate—but Susan says to buy just one, for Kate.

In Lenno we taste locally grown Vanini olive oil, then continue to neighboring Mezzegra, where we hike up the hillside for a view that will leave me as breathless as does the challenging ascent, a deliberate physical effort on my part: Susan always wanted us to do things together, but I invariably begged off the long walks that she loved, happy to join her at mealtime. We stop in Laglio, the lakefront town where George Clooney and Donatella Versace own villas.

And we visit the island of Comacina, to dine at what some consider one of the best restaurants in Italy, the Locanda dell'Isola Comacina. As Susan and I board a small boat for the quarter-mile crossing, I catch her up on Comacina's history.

"Almost no one set foot on the island from the 1100s to the 1940s," I intone, "thanks to a curse imposed by the bishop of Como. Only in 1947 was it supposedly dispelled." I pause. "You think people still buy into the curse?"

Susan grins and looks over our fellow passengers. "Other than you, probably not."

The restaurant fills the top floor of a two-story villa overlooking the lake. Promptly seated, we sip a crisp Soave Classico wine as we dine on owner Benvenuto Puricelli's cooking: smoked ham, grilled trout, chicken baked in a woodstove, slabs of Parmigiano

Reggiano cheese. Then Puricelli emerges from the kitchen and proceeds to pour brandy and sugar into a large copper pot that has been filled with rich coffee, telling us diners that drinking his special brew is the only way to leave the island curse free.

Susan takes two sips. "It's too strong for my taste. But good."

"You're going to finish it all, right?" I ask, having downed my portion.

She shakes her head.

"But you have to," I say. "Otherwise the curse will follow you off the island."

The early afternoon sun seems to hover over her shoulders, the deep-blue lake sparkling behind her. She is as beautiful as the day we first met, in 1976—and I realize how foolish I sound, jabbering about some curse to a woman dying of stage four lung cancer. She turns, looks out on Lake Como, and is silent. Finally she says, "I'm beyond the reach of any curse."

THE TOWNS ALONG COMO'S SHORES have constituted one of the world's great silk centers since the Renaissance, thanks to an abundant supply of water (needed to boil the silk cocoons for their silk fibers) and mulberry trees, which the silkworms feed on. Today Lake Como's silk works supply such high-end fashion houses as Versace, Ungaro, and Hermès.

"Silk helped turn this region into a destination of choice

SUSAN AND I
BOTH KNOW
THAT FOR HER,
FOREVER IS
JUST MONTHS
AWAY. "TAKE ME
SOMEPLACE
THAT CAN MAKE
ME FORGET I'M
DYING," SHE SAYS.

Snow-dusted peaks and
azure waters frame
Lake Como's sole island,
Comacina, popular for
its landmark restaurant.



for those in need of rest and relaxation,” Costanza Murino, a frequent visitor from Milan, tells us one afternoon. “These days, I suppose there is one man in particular to thank.”

“Who?” I ask.

“Ralph Lauren. He bought the silk for his clothes here when he first started his business and now returns to vacation.”

One century-old Como silk house, Mantero, frames its craft as “weaving emotions.” Susan and I have just strolled past its headquarters and showroom on Via Volta, in Lake Como’s regional capital, also called Como, a few minutes’ drive south of Cernobbio. Through the windows we make out a shimmering rainbow of silk scarves, ties, and shawls. I’m ready to step in to buy a foulard when Susan spots one of Como’s other gems, the 12th-century Basilica of San Fedele. Places that have stood the test of time now call to her.

“Come, let’s go see what’s inside,” she says, tugging eagerly at my arm.

We enter the hushed space, lit by a rose window from the 1500s and arrayed with richly hued medieval frescoes. Relics of St. Fidelis, a Roman soldier executed near here allegedly for helping to free Christian prisoners, rest in the marble altar. Susan turns to me. “I need to talk to you.”

I follow her out to the piazza, an ancient locale that is dotted with ocher- and umber-colored town houses.

“Let’s sit for a bit,” she says, pointing to a freshly painted wood bench.

“You all right?” I ask.

“Today is a good day,” she says. “I still get those now and then.”

“There’s a gelato stand across the way,” I answer. “I can buy you one of the chocolate cones you like.”

Susan grabs my hand and rests it on her leg.

“Maybe later,” she says. “First I need you to promise me something. Not for now, for after.”

I take a deep breath and find it hard to form words; all I come up with is a nod.

“I want you to do the things you always talked about doing but never did,” she says. “The house on a lake you wanted. Buying the vineyard that will use up all your money. Another dog, to keep Gus company. Just don’t let too much time pass before you do. Each day is like a year, as I found out the hard way. And I want you to be happy, as I always have been. That’s my wish for you.”

“I don’t want to do any of that without you,” I say. “It won’t mean the same.”

“It will have to be without me,” Susan says. “That decision has been made.”

She leans against me and stares out at the lake. “Promise me that,” she whispers. “It’s one last promise.”

I kiss the top of her head and close my eyes. “I promise,” I whisper back.

We sit on the bench until late afternoon, temporarily setting aside our fears and concerns yet bracing for the cold reality that soon we will have no choice but to face them all head-on.

“We should get going,” Susan finally says, rising.

“Where to?”

She points across the way, to the gelato stand. “Does your offer still hold?”

“Always,” I answer. “Always.”

LAKE COMO IS THE PERFECT PLACE to visit when starting a new chapter in life—a new romance, a marriage—or simply to enjoy the company of someone with whom you’ve shared much. It also, I’m discovering with some pain, is a loving place to say goodbye. Susan and I find ourselves often gazing at the lake, compelled by its shape-shifting waters, shading from an ocean indigo to a deeper midnight blue. We’re at its shores at sunup, warm cups of coffee in hand, watching the first waves cross its surface. We make a point of being by it at sundown, when snow on the hillsides seems to melt right into the lake as the landscape slowly descends into darkness for a night of silent rest.

We also walk and talk a lot, going over the life we have shared, smiling about the many good times, shaking our heads at the mistakes made along the way. Other than shortness of breath, Susan shows no sign of the war being waged inside her body. The lake seems to lift her spirits and put her mind at ease.

“This time will stay with me always,” she murmurs one night, her voice soft. “People who live here are lucky to call it home. They wake to such a beautiful sight. It never leaves them.”

I find myself wishing we’d rented one more boat and taken one more turn around the magical lake, tucked into one more meal at flower-adorned Ristorante Navedano, my

wife happy with a glass of simple house wine and a bowl of soup. I long for one more stay at Villa d’Este, seeing Susan pose in front of the villa’s statue of Hercules (that symbol of overcoming adversity), her pain a fading memory. But we both know we have another journey ahead of us.

I am aware of what awaits her—the late ambulance rides through empty city streets, the endless rotation of nurses and doctors doing all they can to combat the inevitable—and I dread it with every breath I take. But none of it matters as long as we are by this life-affirming lake. It is as if time has frozen for us: Stay here, and we’ll remain free of pain and death. The woman I love will forever be next to me, staring at the still, blue waters, talking about her hopes for our children, the plans she wants to make—and the places on Lake Como she still wants to see.

Susan Jill Toepfer died a few months after this trip to Lake Como. Author Lorenzo Carcaterra said that she spoke often of their days by the lake.

LORENZO CARCATERRA is the author of 11 books, including the recent thriller *The Wolf* (2014). Contributing photographer **MASSIMO BASSANO**, born in Italy’s southern region of Calabria, often covers his native land for *Traveler*.

WE GAZE OFTEN
AT THE LAKE,
COMPELLED
BY ITS SHAPE-
SHIFTING WATER,
SHADING FROM
AN OCEAN
INDIGO TO
A DEEPER
MIDNIGHT BLUE.

Did you know a group of sea turtles is called a *bale*?

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THE INSIDER

Lake Como, Italy

ITALY'S THIRD LARGEST water body and one of Europe's deepest, Lake Como has drawn vacationers for two millennia with its mountain landscapes, Mediterranean climate, and lakeside attractions. Visitors today enjoy historic villas, parks, and shopping in one of the world's silk-design capitals.

WHEN TO GO

Sunny, hot summers bring high season—and high rates. Better bets: spring and fall, with pleasingly mild weather (though May can be rainy), fewer visitors, and lower rates. Spring means asparagus, celebrated with a popular festival in the town of Tremezzo. In September and October, look for *feste* centering around locally prepared salami, cheeses, roasted chestnuts, and wines.

WHERE TO STAY

It's hard to beat the

star power of the **Villa d'Este**. Guests choose from 152 individually decorated rooms and two villas. A 25-acre park includes paths and themed gardens. From \$496. Looking for lower wattage? Try one of Como's 19th-century villa hotels, such as the **Palace Hotel**, part of which occupies the grand Palazzo Plinius (from \$170); the **Hotel Villa Fiori**, on the lake (from \$170); and the smaller **Hotel Villa Giulia**, overlooking the lake (rooms and suites; from \$124). Most

rates include breakfast. For contemporary apartment-style digs, consider **Residence Diaz**, in Como, where studios start at \$90, or **Residence Haus Bethusy**, in Bellagio (studios from \$80).

WHERE TO EAT

You can count on good eating around Lake Como; even better, many restaurants come with lake views. Author Lorenzo Carcaterra's top choice: "a meal at the half-century-old **Locanda dell'Isola Comacina**, the only establishment on Lake Como's only island." Diners here tuck into a five-course set menu that includes fish and wedges of Parmigiano cheese. Also a favorite, in Cernobbio, is **Il Gatto Nero** ("the black cat"), where local herbs flavor such regional dishes as risotto with duck ragù. **Crotto dei Platani** has perched over the lake, in Brienno, since 1855, making it the area's oldest eatery; family-run and occupying one

of the last traditional cellars in the region, it specializes in fresh lake fish and Italian wines. Known for an elegant setting in a 19th-century garden villa in the town of Como, **Ristorante Navedano** makes up for an absence of lake views with its stylish preparations (scallop ravioli, venison) at equivalent prices. Find simpler surroundings and fare at nearby **Il Solito Posto** ("the usual place"), serving homemade pasta since 1888. Mountain food—buckwheat noodles, venison polenta—rules at **La Genzianella**, a woodland chalet that overlooks both branches of the lake.

DON'T MISS

Historic **Villa Carlotta**, in Tremezzo, for its garden park, trove of neoclassical sculptures by Antonio Canova, and romantic history: It was a wedding gift from Princess Marianne of the Netherlands to her daughter, Prussian princess Charlotte. The

LEGENDARY LOCALE

GARBO WAS HERE

Built in 1568 as a residence by a cardinal born in Cernobbio, the Renaissance-style Villa d'Este has played a leading role in local doings under a succession of high-profile proprietors, including a ballerina, a marquis, and a princess of Wales. Added on to over many decades, the property began a transformation into a luxury hotel in 1873, soon earning the title "Hollywood on Lake Como." Among its many notable guests: Mark Twain, Giuseppe Verdi, Greta Garbo, Alfred Hitchcock, and Madonna.



Villa d'Este gazebo



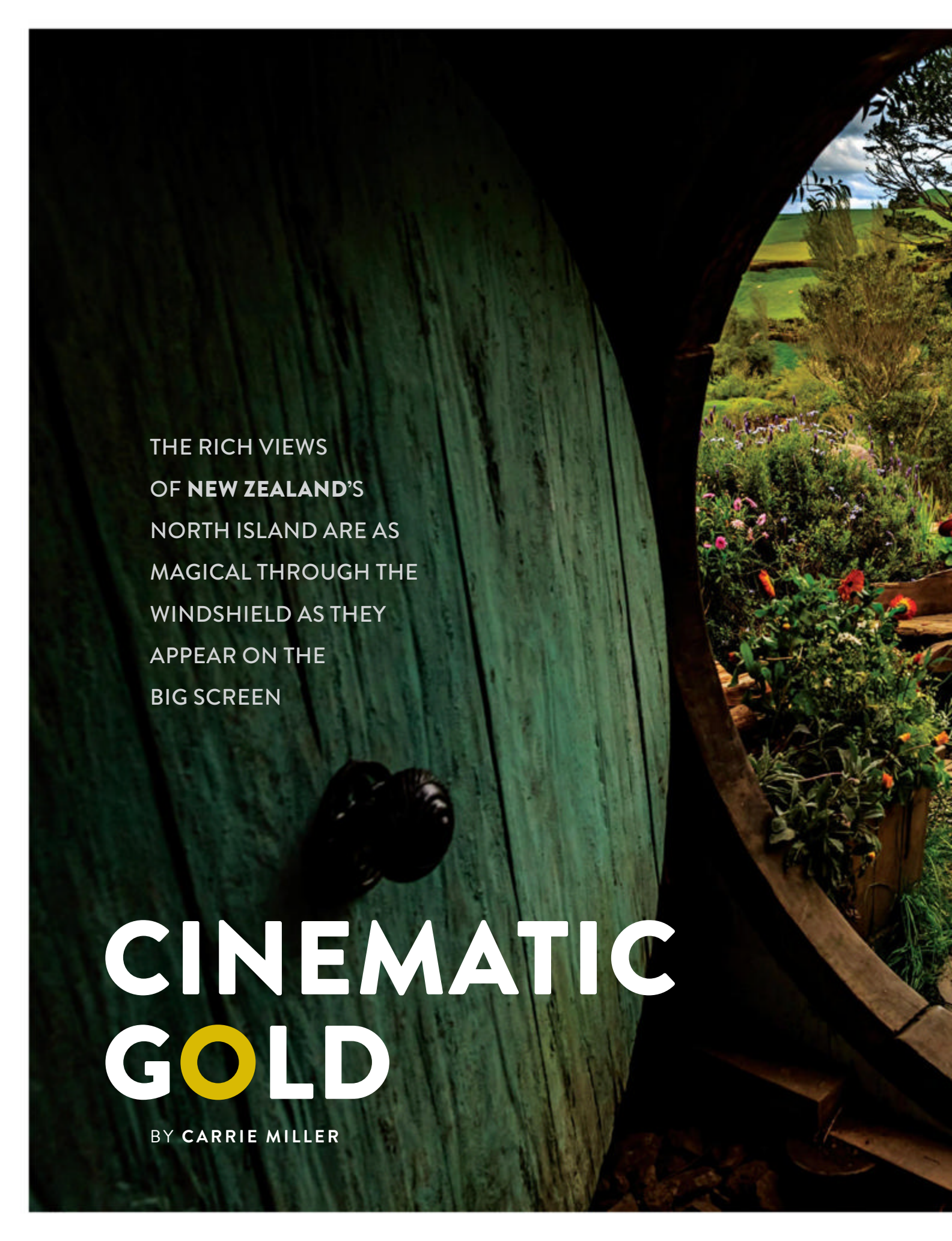
ATLAS



Alessandro Volta, inventor of the first electrical battery (from which we get the word "volt"), was born in Como.

Italy's shortest river, the seasonal **Fiumelatte**, above the town of Varenna, flows for only 820 feet. Among those eager to find its source: **Leonardo da Vinci**.

Dictator **Benito Mussolini** was shot to death in the town of Mezzegra while trying to flee Italy in 1945.



THE RICH VIEWS
OF **NEW ZEALAND'S**
NORTH ISLAND ARE AS
MAGICAL THROUGH THE
WINDSHIELD AS THEY
APPEAR ON THE
BIG SCREEN

CINEMATIC GOLD

BY CARRIE MILLER

The hobbit holes of the North Island's Hobbiton movie set act as a portal to New Zealand's film legacy.



IN NEW ZEALAND even a nondescript cut in the woods can lead somewhere extraordinary. That magnetic pull to see what's around the next bend, whether sparkling glacier or primeval forest, is my favorite thing about the country—its “round-the-corner-ness,” as I call it. Here on a pastoral sheep farm on the North Island, I feel the buzz. A clearing opens, and I step into a story. ¶ The vista in front of me also struck native filmmaker Peter Jackson. Recognizing the spot instantly as Hobbiton, the hobbit community written into legend by J. R. R. Tolkien in *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), Jackson immortalized it on screen in six movies, the last of which came out in 2014. As I survey the scene, I can see Gandalf, the stories' sage wizard, driving his pony cart through the banked hills of the valley. I imagine Bilbo Baggins racing out of

the gate without his pocket handkerchief. In front of me are 44 hobbit holes nestled into rolling green hillsides. Paths lead up, down, and over the hills. Laundry dries on the line. Apple and pear trees hang low with the last of the summer fruit.

I feel a catch in my throat. Though I had steeled myself for an onslaught of souvenir kiosks, Hobbiton feels like more than a movie set for tourists: It's my imagination brought to life.

As a 14-year-old in Minnesota, reading Tolkien under the covers by flashlight, I longed for the adventure and friendship found in the pages. Eleven years ago I followed my own quest to Wellington, the beating heart of New Zealand's film industry.

wanted to see New Zealand as a film set. I've always preferred to separate my love for Tolkien and the rumpled landscape that's become my home. But when my friend Lance Lones, a transplanted Californian who has worked in the film industry for 18 years, suggested we use film locations as markers on a road trip, he convinced me that the power of stories could help deepen my bond to both.

“We have a real emotional connection to film. Don't underestimate it,” he said. “Come with me to Hobbiton, and you'll see.”

EACH DETAIL at Hobbiton is a labor of love of Jackson and his team of wizards—right down to the moss on the fences, explains our affable tour guide, Aidan O'Malley, on one of 17 daily tours.

“Jackson decided to reverse the natural sunrise and sunset here, so he also changed the moss on the fences to reflect that,” O'Malley says, grinning. “Hobbiton only appears in *The Hobbit* for seven minutes, and in *The Lord of the Rings* for 35 minutes—that's a lot of perfection for 42 minutes.”

After touring the grounds, Lones and I wind down the day at the Green Dragon, Hobbiton's working pub that appeared in the films. A fire roars in front of us, the sunset glowing through the round windows at our sides. Massive macrocarpa beams cross the ceiling, carved with grapes, barley, and a serpentine dragon in faded green. Herbs hang in the kitchen. Celtic music pipes gently overhead. I settle deeper into my leather armchair and take another sip from my clay mug of beer.

I strike up a conversation with Gemma Youtlen and Tom Boreham, a British couple who are halfway through a round-the-world trip. I mention that the

Green Dragon just might be the pub I've been looking for all my life.

“This is the highlight, I have to say,” says Youtlen in agreement. She lowers her voice as if confiding a secret: “And I'm not even a *Lord of the Rings* fan.”

Boreham is. “I first read the book when I was ten—25 years ago—and it's my favorite,” he says. “I was concerned, to be honest, that they would Disney-fy my beloved Hobbiton. But I recognized this pub straight away. It's gob-smacking the way the idyll of the Shire is epitomized here. Only New Zealand could take a major movie attraction and make it feel like a place you're familiar with.”



The boardwalk at Tongariro National Park

In that time, as *Lord of the Rings* tourists flocked here by the thousands—quickly joined by *Hobbit* fans—filmmakers were translating the remote country's surreal landscape as the backdrop for movies ranging from *King Kong* to *River Queen*, *The Chronicles of Narnia* to *The Last Samurai*.

Even Hollywood tour de force James Cameron enlisted the technical prowess of Wellington's Weta Digital visual effects company to create the dystopian dreamscape of Pandora for his blockbuster *Avatar*. The North Island so enthralled Cameron that he purchased land in Wairarapa, east of Wellington, where he is working on a trio of sequels to *Avatar*.

In spite of all of that—or maybe because of it—I've never

THEO ALLOFS/CORBIS (BOARDWALK), MATTHEW CHAN (PUB INTERIOR), EWEN CHARLTON (SHEEP), MELISSA MACGILL (CAR), KIM PETERSEN/CORBIS (DOORWAY, OPENING PAGES)



Special effects tame the North Island, from grazing sheep (above) to the sit-awhile charm of Hobbiton's Green Dragon pub (left) and the gracious Chateau Tongariro Hotel (below).





Lords of the Ring of Fire: New Zealand's Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu volcanoes rise above the clouds.

THE NEXT MORNING, I drive us south on state highways that wind through the Piopio and Te Kuiti area, which stood in for the thick upland woods called Trollshaw Forest in *The Hobbit*—the lair of trolls, as its name suggests, and the site of several pivotal movie scenes.

The scenery melts effortlessly from jagged rocks to gentle undulations, wire fences, and weathered limestone formations—that constant change to the topography that I love. The famed greenness of the North Island fills the car windows. I think of my friend Grant Roa. He's a writer, producer, and actor who has been involved with most New Zealand-based films in one capacity or another, and he has a soft spot for this part of the country.

"The South Island has that epic scenery, but I like the contrasts of things on the North Island," he had told me as I planned my trip. "I like it when you see green rolling hills and turn around and there's a snowcapped mountain behind you. Or you're on the beach and behind you is all this native bush."

About 140 miles south of the hills of Hobbiton, Tongariro National Park embodies those extremes. Home to three active volcanoes—Ruapehu, Tongariro, and Ngauruhoe—as well as the Whakapapa ski field, Tongariro National Park was used to represent Mordor, the Land of Shadow, a blasted and desolate stronghold of evil in Middle-earth.

Tongariro is also a World Heritage area, and one of my favorite places in New Zealand. In half a dozen visits, I've hiked the Tongariro Crossing, skied down Whakapapa's slopes, and reveled in white-capped views in crackling-crisp air from what feels like the roof of the world. Today, though, Lones and I are alone in Iwikau Village at the top of the ski field and closed in by mist. The temperature has dropped 26 degrees since Hobbiton and hovers around freezing, with a swirling wind that whips at us from every direction.

Lones finds it strange: "Mordor should be hot and dry," he says. My interpretation of Mordor is simply a thoroughly unpleasant place—and deceptive, which Tongariro is being.

Every other time I've been up here, the sky has been clear as glass. I know its weather can change quickly—and violently—but this is the first time Tongariro has shown me its wild side. Now I see more sharply the landscape's tangled heap of black and red lava rubble, where small, almost iridescent white-green vegetation struggles to grow. Rocks claw at the sky. I can imagine being utterly lost here.

In reality, though, we're only a ten-minute drive from the Chateau Tongariro, the granddaddy of New Zealand hotels in the historic Whakapapa Village. Built in the 1920s, the elegant neo-Georgian structure emanates opulent, old-world ambience, a time of dinner jackets and crystal glasses, right on the flank of an active volcano.

While sipping a glass of red wine from Gisborne, a vineyard region 260 miles away on the east coast, I reflect on the fact that I'm spending time with two good friends—not only Lones but a place that seized my heart the first time I saw it.

"That's the good thing about film locations," Lones says. "When you're missing places you love, you can always revisit them in the movies." That, and visiting Tongariro with *Rings* in mind allowed me to see it with different eyes: Tongariro has an unpredictability that's grand and profound.

THE BEECH TREES jostle for position, crowding over the road that leads into the southern end of Tongariro from the alpine village of Ohakune. It's hard to believe that this sleepy, winter-waiting ski hub sits just 45 minutes east of Pipiriki. There, at the edge of Whanganui National Park, lush forests set a moody scene for 2005's *River Queen* about the battle between the native Maori population and European settlers in the 1860s.

A few minutes past Ohakune, most traces of the outside world recede in our rearview mirror. We're headed toward the Turoa ski field, at the foot of Mount Ruapehu, 30 minutes south of the hotel, in search of Mangawhero Falls. I've skied Turoa several times, but I've never paid attention to either side of the road—I'm always focused on the slopes. Two miles before the ski field, on the right side, we spot the sign for the falls.

Under a canopy of dripping beech trees, a peat brown track, brightened with red mushrooms and bursts of white lichen, suddenly leads to a familiar scene. Watching the little river navigate the rust-colored rocks in its path before plunging over the falls hits me the same way as hearing a favorite song. Here the duplicitous Gollum chased a fish in *The Two Towers*, the second film in *The Lord of the Rings* series.

Stronger than déjà vu, my memory of this place is as clear as the water, although I'm seeing it for the first time. I waded into the stream, the water biting cold, making my feet ache. I've driven this road a handful of times and never knew this was here.

"And we would have missed it, except that it appeared in a movie," Lones says. "Location scouts have already done all the work, handpicking these stunning locations. It's like a treasure map: All you have to do is follow it."

WE RETURN to Wellington, the southernmost city of the North Island. This is where I first lived in New Zealand—home base for my early explorations—and it's also the home of the cinematic geniuses who translated Tolkien on the big screen. But I have one more stop to make.

I choose a path I haven't taken before and find myself walking the eerie, pine-needle-carpeted trails of Wellington's Mount Victoria. Climbing the slope, I'm suddenly pulled up short with a jolt of recognition. In front of me are the twisted tree roots where four small hobbits once hid from evil, cloaked Nazgul wraiths, after finding a shortcut to mushrooms in *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

I know this feeling now, like seeing a familiar face in a crowd, the thrill of spotting a long-lost friend.

A former *Traveler* staffer, **CARRIE MILLER** wrote about cage diving with sharks off Australia in the October 2014 issue.

MY MEMORY OF THIS
PLACE IS AS CLEAR AS
THE WATER, ALTHOUGH
I'M SEEING IT FOR THE
FIRST TIME.

North Island, New Zealand

MOVIE BUFFS can explore countless shooting locations on the North Island. When time is limited, Wellington and its environs provide ample sites, lore, and glimpses behind the scenes of a robust local film industry.

WHERE TO GO

Wellington features a vibrant and walkable core. Holding court at Courtenay Place, the **Embassy Theatre** has seen more than its share of movie premieres. Don't be fooled by its quiet exterior: Inside, this 1924 theater has the sweeping marble staircases and glittering mirrors of a bygone age. Nearby, the

elegant **Opera House** stood in for a New York vaudeville theater in Peter Jackson's 2005 remake of *King Kong*. On the southeast edge of the city, the Miramar Peninsula has a gem of an art deco theater, the **Roxy Cinema**; its stated mission is to bring back some romance to moviegoing.

Just down the road, the **Weta Cave** visitors

center offers tours, artifacts, and merchandise on the site of the Oscar-winning Weta Workshop. Co-founded by Jackson, this props and costumes company works in tandem with the visual special effects division, Weta Digital.

Check for upcoming talks and book signings by artists and technicians at www.weta-workshop.com.

WHERE TO EAT

Film cast and crew hang out at the **Matterhorn** (motto: "Eat Drink Music"), near Wellington's Opera House, and at **Fidel's**, an irreverent café also on Cuba Street.

Up in Matamata, the eclectic **Workman's Café** attracts locals as well as the Hobbiton-bound for coffee, brunch, and a lively bar after dinner.

MIDDLE-EARTH SITES

Within an hour's drive of Wellington, **Fernside** park—one of New Zealand's oldest gardens—appeared as the Lothlorian forest realm in *The Lord of the Rings*. You can visit Fernside only on an official film tour, but anyone can book a night in the park's three-bedroom **Gatehouse**.

Also not far from Wellington stands the native forest of rimu and rata trees

at **Kaitoke Regional Park** (aka Rivendell in Middle-earth). Fern-clad gorges drop into the Hutt River, used as the Anduin River in the *Rings* films.

WHAT TO PACK

Lord of the Rings Location Guidebook, complete with Middle-earth trivia and GPS coordinates, made Matamata author Ian Brodie a cult hero.

ATLAS



Wellington is the world's southernmost capital city.

On a visit to the island's geothermal Tikitere, Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw called the steaming pools "Hell's Gate"—and the name stuck.

Before he climbed Everest, Edmund Hillary kept bees on the North Island.



Waitakere Ranges

DRAMATIC SETTINGS

STREAM THESE FILMS

The North Island's landscapes hold cinematic cachet. *The Piano* (1993), by native daughter Jane Campion, starred Karekare, a black-sand surfing beach in Auckland's Waitakere Ranges. Fellow Kiwi Andrew Adamson transformed nearby Woodhill Forest into a witch's camp in Narnia in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005). Hollywood tapped volcanic Mount Taranaki, on the west coast, to play Japan's Mount Fuji in *The Last Samurai* (2003).





Focal length: 28mm Exposure: F/10 15.0 sec ISO100 © Ian Plant



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I ♥ Buenos Aires

ARGENTINA'S DEBONAIR CAPITAL HUMS ROUND THE CLOCK,
FROM MORNING COFFEE TO LATE NIGHT TANGO

BY VICKY BAKER

ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA SIMMONS

Visitors to Buenos Aires

invariably fall in love with it and want to stay forever, but locals would rather be in Spain, Italy, or anywhere else. At least so say the lyrics of the song “Puerto Madero,” written in Spanglish by half Argentine, half American musician Kevin Johansen, about one of the city’s shiniest neighborhoods.

Porteños, as the residents of Buenos Aires call themselves, are notoriously complex and contradictory characters, fiercely patriotic yet puzzled by how much their sprawling hometown enchants visitors. They know their country is famous for soccer and steak and tango dancing, but they can’t understand why we get giddy about what they consider everyday things: our first sighting of poncho-clad gauchos, or *cortado* coffee, served in chunky glassware.

It is surprisingly easy to slip into daily life in

Buenos Aires because the city doesn’t revolve around its attractions. Tick off the obvious—the pink-walled **Casa Rosada** (allegedly painted with cow’s blood), where the president of Argentina resides; renowned **Recoleta Cemetery**, with its trove of elaborate tombs—and let the rest of the city reveal itself as you explore it at your leisure.

Rise late (most shops don’t open until 10 a.m. and museums rarely stir before midday) and skip any hotel breakfast for a coffee and some *medialunas*—Argentine croissants—at a sidewalk café. Then set out for a stroll through the city’s highly contrasting neighborhoods. Grand avenues and ornate town houses from the early 1900s mark classy **Recoleta**. The hippest part of town, stylish **Palermo Viejo**, centers around a low-rise quarter of cobbled streets. Then there is bohemian-feeling **San Telmo**, one of the birthplaces of tango and Buenos Aires’s oldest residential quarter.

Dancers take turns at tango (below) in the club La Catedral. Paintings cover walls at Buenos Aires’s Museum of Latin American Art (opposite, left). Sushi arranged with Latin flair fills plates at Osaka (opposite, right).





FOOD REVOLUTION

Buenos Aires's food scene is essentially divided into two camps. In one you'll find time-warp cafés and no-frills *parrillas* (steakhouses), most of which serve up the same dishes: steak of varying cuts, potato fries, slightly overcooked pasta, juicy empanadas, and simple salads. To enjoy a classic parrilla experience, head to the neighborhood of Palermo, and **Don Julio**, its shelves, walls, and counters decorated with bottles of wine. Another fine option: white-tablecloth **Cantina Don Carlos**, in La Boca next to the Bombonera stadium (take a taxi if traveling at night). Arrive hungry—servings are *abundante*. Vegetarian? You still should stop in a parrilla, if only for the atmosphere. Then head to **Buenos Aires Verde**, a specialist in organic, raw, meat-free cuisine.

The second, more modernist camp celebrates the city's cutting-edge food scene, headed by chefs who earned their stripes in leading European restaurants. Dante Liporace, of the acclaimed **Tarquino**, uses tricks he learned at Catalonia's pioneering El Bulli to create dishes such as a deconstructed provolone pizza. **Hernán Gipponi Restaurante**, headed by the eponymous chef, welcomes adventurous palates to its "one table" communal dinners for tasting menus that may

TOP 5 LOCAL TIPS

- 1 Walk the streets of the **VILLA CRESPO** district, with its 19th-century buildings, for a glimpse into Palermo's past.
- 2 Buy a **GUIA T BUS GUIDE** from a newspaper kiosk, and ask a local how to use it.
- 3 **BUS NUMBER 152** takes in key sites, including the Casa Rosada and colorful La Boca quarter.
- 4 Pay in **DOLLARS** for better deals, but don't carry large amounts on the streets.
- 5 Check out the 180° view of Buenos Aires from the Sky Bar at the **HOTEL PULITZER**; it's open to nonguests.

include slow-cooked egg with creamed corn. If you've never tried Japanese/Peruvian fusion food, **Osaka** is a must, especially for fish lovers.

Casual dining restaurants, including many parrillas, don't take reservations, but they are recommended for upmarket places from 9 p.m. on.

AFTER MIDNIGHT

Buenos Aires lives to party. Nights here can be long and raucous, but Porteños know how to pace themselves, which is why top venues still jump at dawn. These nocturnal habits aren't only for clubbers. When the clock strikes midnight, you'll spot older diners mulling dessert options and young children running around full of pep. As for discos, they only wind down in the predawn hours.

To keep up, visitors may need to sneak in a nap. Bars often don't get revving until midnight, and nightclubs typically fill only after 2 a.m. A good starting point is a show by drumming troupe La Bomba de Tiempo, hosted on Mondays at the cavernous **Ciudad Cultural Konex**, an "alternative" performance space. For tango music, it is **El Boliche de Roberto**, known for its tango crooners. Dancers, especially beginners, should check out **La Catedral**, which offers informal tango lessons.

When you're warmed up, taxi over to **Palermo**;



Eva Perón (left), wife of onetime ruler Juan Perón, adorns a brooch. White-walled Recoleta Cemetery (right) rises behind a musician.

most of the city's nightlife is concentrated in the area. Kick things off with a Cynar julep at **Rey de Copas**, an eclectically stylish lounge bar, then see where the night takes you. Ten years ago, a handful of bars dominated the scene. Now new cocktail joints seem to open every week, some with deliberately hidden entrances: Access to **Floreria Atlantico** first funnels you through a florist cum record shop.

TO MARKET, TO MARKET

Fashion and the arts have long been valued in Argentina's capital. Local designers earned the city even more global acclaim with the launch in 2001 of BAFWeek, or Buenos Aires Fashion Week. The largest concentration of boutiques resides in **Palermo**. Two subdivisions here, nicknamed **Soho** and **Hollywood**, have grown into labyrinths of stores interspersed with bars, cafés, clubs, and *heladerías* (ice cream parlors).

Downtown lures shoppers with brash, pricey **Calle Florida**, a pedestrianized avenue lined with exclusive shops, but much more fun are the city's markets, or *ferias*, full of vendors selling interesting artifacts and quirky souvenirs. The most famous may be the **Feria de San Telmo**, held on

BEFORE YOU GO

FILMS

Evita, a 1996 musical starring Madonna, chronicles the life of Eva Perón, the controversial wife of Argentine ruler Juan Perón. *The Tango Lesson* (1997) follows a British woman obsessed with Argentina's dance.

BOOKS

On Heroes and Tombs (1981), by Buenos Aires native Ernesto Sabato, depicts the city in the 1950s. *The Buenos Aires Broken Hearts Club*, by Jessica Morrison (2003), experiences today's B.A. via a millennial narrator.



Sundays, which attracts more than 250 vendors dealing in antiques and other wares. Also held on weekends are markets on **Plaza Francia**, in Recoleta, and **Plaza Serrano**, in Palermo; at both you can find artworks, photos (many of La Boca's brightly painted metal houses), hand-stitched leather bags, and signs written in *fileteado*, the traditional flowery writing associated with tango.

Just to the west of Palermo lies a treasure-filled indoor furniture market, **Mercado de las Pulgas**, for those who love the rustic/chic trend. It's about leather along **Murillo Street**, in the Villa Crespo district. Keen on a pair of tango shoes? Try **Comme Il Faut**, on Arenales Street, or browse the *calles* of Abasto, south of downtown. (While you're there, visit the **Carlos Gardel Museum**, dedicated to the dapper tango legend who died young in a 1935 plane crash.) For handbags, wallets, gloves, and more, check out **Humawaca**. Need gifts? Head to **Calma Chicha**, a one-stop shop with everything from cowhide rugs to *submarino* glasses, used for hot chocolate the Argentine way, by immersing a thick baton of chocolate into a glass of warm milk.

British writer **VICKY BAKER** lived in Argentina when covering Latin America for various outlets.

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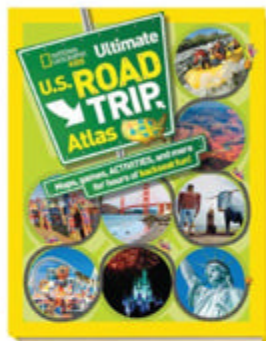
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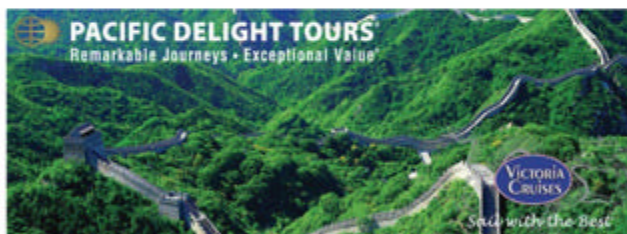
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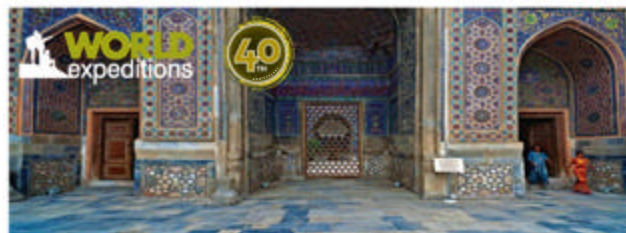
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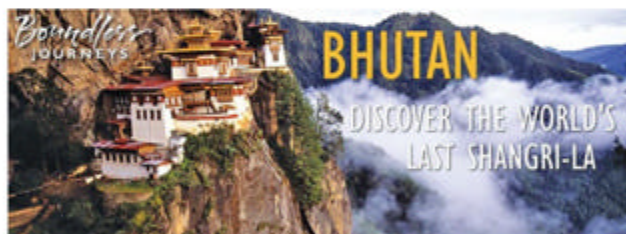
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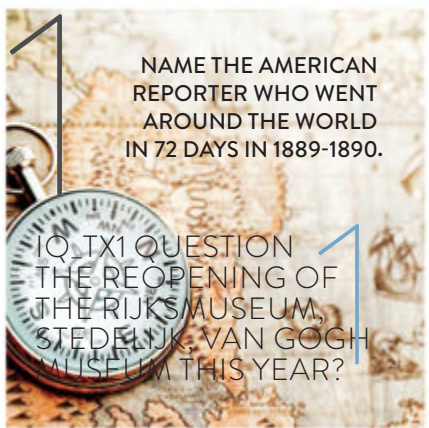
By GEORGE W. STONE

1

NAME THE AMERICAN REPORTER WHO WENT AROUND THE WORLD IN 72 DAYS IN 1889-1890.

IQ TX1 QUESTION

THE REOPENING OF THE RIJKSMUSEUM, STEDELJCK, VAN GOGH MUSEUM THIS YEAR?



2

WHICH COUNTRY GROWS WATERMELONS IN PERFECT CUBES?



WHAT DO THEY CALL COWBOYS ON SOUTH AMERICA'S PAMPAS?

3



4

DINOSAURS ONCE RULED LARAMIDIA, AN ISLAND LANDMASS THAT FORMED THE WEST COAST OF WHICH CONTINENT?



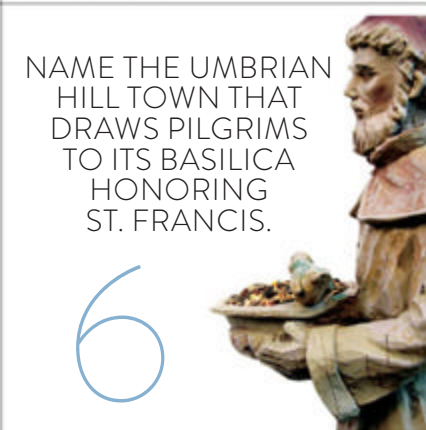
5

THE ALLEGHENY AND MONONGAHELA FLOW TOGETHER TO FORM WHAT RIVER IN PITTSBURGH?



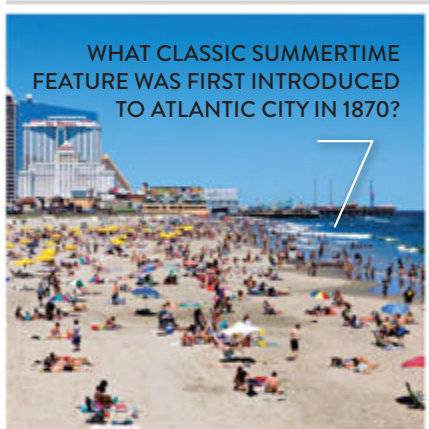
NAME THE UMBRIAN HILL TOWN THAT DRAWS PILGRIMS TO ITS BASILICA HONORING ST. FRANCIS.

6



WHAT CLASSIC SUMMERTIME FEATURE WAS FIRST INTRODUCED TO ATLANTIC CITY IN 1870?

7



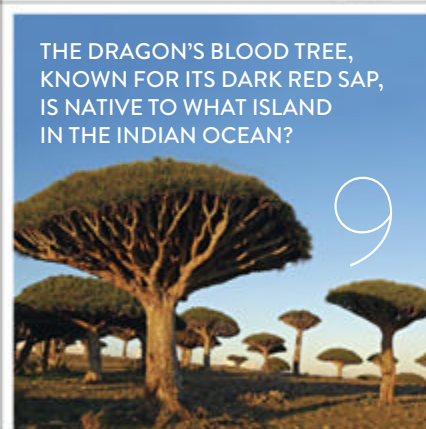
8

WHAT AMERICAN FOOD PRODUCT DID MARGARET THATCHER REFER TO AS A "WARTIME DELICACY"?



THE DRAGON'S BLOOD TREE, KNOWN FOR ITS DARK RED SAP, IS NATIVE TO WHAT ISLAND IN THE INDIAN OCEAN?

9



ANSWERS 1. Nellie Bly 2. Japan 3. gauchos 4. North America 5. Ohio River 6. Assisi 7. the boardwalk 8. Spam 9. Socotra

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